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T W O
LETTERS,

CONTAINING

I. An ENQUIRY concerning Church Discipline: In which is shewn what Rules and Directions Christ and his Apostles have given with relation thereto.

In a LETTER to the Reverend Dr. *Stebbing*.

II. An ENQUIRY concerning Covenants: Wherein the new, or Christian, Covenant is particularly considered.

In a LETTER to the Reverend Dr. *Waterland*.

To which is added,

A DEFENCE OF PROTESTANTISM:

In Answer to *The modest Plea for Popery*.

Offered to the Consideration of those whom Papists have seduc'd, or are endeavouring to draw over to their Religion.

By *THO. CHUBB.*

L O N D O N:

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A N
E N Q U I R Y

C O N C E R N I N G

Church-Discipline:

Wherein is shewn what Rules and
Directions C H R I S T and his Apostles
have given with relation thereto.

In a LETTER to the Reverend Dr. STEBBING.







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E N Q U I R Y
C O N C E R N I N G
C H U R C H - D I S C I P L I N E .

Reverend Sir,

TH E reason why I address my self to you in this enquiry is, because it is a question which you seem to be in a particular and special manner interested in; and therefore I think it may fairly be presumed, you will think it concerns you carefully to examine it. As Church-Discipline has contributed much to, or at least has been a plausible pretext for, a great deal of that cruelty and barbarity which has been exercised by men professing Christianity towards each other, so this renders

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ders it necessary to be enquired into, whether such Church-Discipline as is contended for has any foundation in the Christian revelation, that is, in that revelation of God's will which Christ hath delivered to the world for Christians to direct and govern their affections and behaviour by. For as Christ himself laid the foundation of Christian Societies, so surely those rules and directions which he hath given concerning them ought to be regarded and followed in all succeeding ages: and therefore the first and main point to be enquired into is, What Christ has said, and what rules and directions he has given touching this matter. And in order to do this, we must consult the history of Christ's life and ministry, or those writings which contain the several rules and directions that he hath given with regard to Christian Societies and Church-Discipline; and which I think are as follow.

FIRST, in the parable of the tares of the field, *Matthew xiii. from verse 23 to verse 31. Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man which sowed good seed in his field; but whilst men slept his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, Didst not thou sow good seed in thy field; from whence then hath it tares?*

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He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay, lest whilst ye gather up the tares ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn. This parable is explained from verse 35. to verse 44. Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house, and his Disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom, but the tares are the children of the wicked one: the enemy that sowed them is the Devil; the harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the Angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burnt in the fire, so shall it be in the end of the world. The Son of man shall send forth his Angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. By the the kingdom of heaven in this place I think is plainly intended the gospel dispensation,
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or that kingdom of the Messiah, in which the consciences and behaviour of men should be directed and governed by those rules and principles of action, which Christ revealed to, and set before, them. Christ, considered as the governour of his people, laid down certain doctrinal propositions, which, because of their great importance to mankind, are called the *good news*, or the *gospel*. These propositions, when believed and seriously regarded, become such a spring and principle of action in men, as to reform their vices, and rightly to direct and govern their minds and lives. And those upon whom they have this effect are in this parable called *good seed*, and *wheat*, and *the children of the kingdom*. But as the best things are liable to be perverted and abused, and made subservient to other and contrary purposes than what they were intended for; so Christ foresaw and foretold that it would be the case here. Many, who would profess to be the subjects of Christ's kingdom, would not be governed by his laws, would not frame and fashion their minds and lives after his example, nor agreeably to those rules and principles of action which he had set before them and recommended to them; and others, to answer vile purposes to themselves, would so cut, mangle, and torture his gospel, and would mix and blend such other and false propositions with it, as that, instead of its being in men a spring and principle of virtue and goodness, it would
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become to many an occasion or a pretext to vice and wickedness. And those persons, by whom the design of the gospel is thus perverted, and upon whom the end of it is not answered, tho' they call Christ *Lord*, and call themselves his followers; tho' they are mixed in the same society with his faithful people, and are called by his name; yet, strictly speaking, they are not the true subjects nor children of Christ's kingdom, but are tares which spring up among, and are mixed with, the wheat; they are the children of the wicked one, they are such in Christ's kingdom who offend and do iniquity. And as Christ foresaw and foretold that this would be the case under the gospel dispensation, that is, that there would be this mixture of tares and wheat in his kingdom; the question is, What has he ordered to be done with respect to it? Has he appointed, and thereby authorized, those who are set apart to watch over Christian Societies for their good, or, in other words, the Clergy, wholly to exclude by a judicial act of excommunication from their respective Societies all such corrupted members as aforesaid, or at least all that appear to them to be so; and thereby to make a total separation betwixt the tares and the wheat? The answer is, That he has not appointed any such thing, but on the contrary he seems rather to have strictly forbidden it. For when the servants said to their master, *Wilt*

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thou then that we go and gather them (viz. the tares) up? he (viz. Christ, who is there represented under the character of an householder) said, Nay. Which is the same as if he had said, This must not be done, or I forbid this to be done. And then he assigned the reason for this prohibition, or why such a separation should not be made: Lest whilst ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Which is as much as if he had said, I strictly forbid that any such power be exercised, or any such separation be made in my kingdom, because of the very bad effects which will attend it; for what through the weakness of some, and the wickedness of others, it would be the wheat more than the tares that would be the sufferers thereby. The remedy in this case would be much worse than the disease. Men, fallible men, who are liable to be ignorant, weak, partial, passionate, and the like, and who are likewise liable to be biased and governed by corrupt views of interest or otherways, are by no means to be trusted with such a power, because we may be assured it will be greatly abused. My faithful servants would suffer much more by the exercise of it, than they would do by the aforesaid mixture; and therefore, upon these grounds, I strictly forbid that any such power be assumed or exercised by or among my people. On the contrary, it is my will that the tares and the wheat,

wheat, the good and bad subjects in my kingdom, should grow or be mixed together in the same society, until the time of harvest, the day of judgment; and then I will appoint their separation. And as this is an affair in which the quiet and happiness of my faithful people are greatly interested, and by which they may be great sufferers, therefore I desire and expect, that what I have here said may carefully be attended to and followed: *Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.* This seems to be the sense and the design of the parable. For tho' the field is said to be the world (that is, the people) as Christ's kingdom subsists in it, and his subjects are gathered out of it; yet as it is not the world (or people at large) but Christ's kingdom (or those who are gathered out of, and separated from, the world by professing their subjection to Christ) which this parable of the tares of the field is likened to; so consequently it is not only in the world, but also in Christ's kingdom, that the tares and the wheat must be suffered to grow together. And accordingly the Angels are to gather out of, not the world, but Christ's kingdom, all things that offend, and them which do iniquity. Besides, as they are the servants of Christ, who in this parable are represented as desiring or asking Christ that he would invest them with the power of excommunication; so they are those very servants of Christ, who are by him prohibited the

use of it. And therefore, whatever character those servants may be supposed to bear in Christ's kingdom, or whatever capacity they may be supposed to act in; whether they be such as are appointed to watch over Christian Societies for their good, or whether they be such as are invested with civil power; these, considered as the servants and ministers of Christ's kingdom, are here by him, *viz.* Christ their master, plainly and expressly forbidden to assume and exercise any such power. And indeed the experience of after-ages has abundantly shewn the fitness of the forementioned prohibition, and the justness of the reason upon which it is grounded. Sad and terrible have the effects of the excommunicating power been to many of the faithful servants of Christ. So that the wheat, *viz.* the true subjects of Christ's kingdom, have suffered much more by it, than Christianity could possibly have suffered from the non-exercise of that power. And tho' many reasons may be assigned for the making a separation of the tares from the wheat in Christ's kingdom, yet as those reasons, or the good proposed by such a separation, would not be a balance to the much greater evil which would attend the exercise of such power, therefore Christ seems here to forbid the use of it.

HERE, Sir, I beg you would please to observe, that the rule or direction before laid down, with regard to Christian Societies
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and Church-Discipline, was given by Christ himself, of whom I think it may fairly be presumed, that he was a proper judge of its fitness, and of the justness of the reason upon which it is founded; and therefore if Christ did in the rule above mentioned forbid the excluding wicked men from Christian Societies by excommunication, (which seems to be the case) then if St. *Paul*, or an Angel from Heaven, should have laid down any rules and directions that are contrary to these, (which I think has not been the case) we are not to receive them; *Galatians* i. 8. But then it may be asked, What, must good and bad men be esteemed and treated alike among Christians? Must there be no distinction or discrimination made betwixt those, who make the gospel of Christ the governing principle of their affections and actions, and those, who, tho' they profess it, yet will not be influenced nor governed by it; or those, who pervert and abuse it to answer vile purposes to themselves? Must these consider and treat each other as fellow-members in the same body? This leads me to enquire what rules and directions Christ hath given with relation hereto; and which are,

SECONDLY, *Matt. xviii. 15, 16, 17, 18. Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more,*

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more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church: but if he shall neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a Publican. Verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Here we see how one Christian is to behave towards another, when that other has trespassed against him (or when he knows that the other has acted wrong and unworthy of his Christian profession in any other instance,* the reason for such behaviour being the same in any other case) *viz.* he is to tell him his fault; that is, he is to endeavour to make him sensible of the vileness and wickedness of the action, and to represent to him what will be the consequence of his obstinate continuance in it, or of his repentance and reformation from it; and he is to do this betwixt himself and his offending brother alone, thereby to prevent, if possible, the blasting his brother's character. *If he shall hear thee*, that is, if he is brought to repentance

* Tho' the case, which Christ instances in, be only that of private injuries, yet as the end to be answered by the admonition is not so much the repairing of the injury, as the reforming the offender, (*if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother*) therefore whenever such admonition becomes a proper means towards answering the same end, then it is equally as reasonable; and consequently it is as much the duty of Christians and Christian Societies to admonish in all such cases, as in the case referred to.

tance and reformation by thy means, *thou hast gained thy brother*, that is, thou hast recovered him out of his apostasy from Christ, thou hast loosed him from the bonds of sin wherewith he was bound, and from that condemnation or just displeasure of God which his sin had bound him over to, and hast brought him back again to his duty and allegiance to Christ. *But if he will not hear thee*, that is, if he is not brought to repentance by this means, then thou must not rest satisfied with having admonished him thy self, but must make use of every other proper means to bring him to repentance and reformation; thou must *take with thee one or two more*, to join with thee in a second admonition, that such admonition, when coming from several persons, may, if possible, make the deeper impression upon him. *And if he shall neglect to hear them, then tell it to the Church*, that is, to the Christian Society of which he is a member, that they may join in a third admonition. *But if he shall neglect to hear the Church*, if he shall obstinately persist in his wickedness after all proper means have been used to reclaim him, *then let him be to thee* (and to every other Christian, the reason being the same to every one) *as an heathen man and a Publican*. Here it is to be observed, that our Lord did not say, Let him be to the Church, but only *let him be to thee*, as an heathen man and a Publican. So that the direction given by

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by Christ was not to the Church considered as a Body or Society, but it was to each member thereof considered in his private capacity. And therefore the thing to be enquired into is not, how a Synagogue or Society of *Jews*, considered in their collective capacity, behaved towards an Heathen or a Publican; but only how each *Jew* in his private capacity behaved towards them. And tho' a man, who professes himself a Christian, does by his trespassing against his brother, or by his being guilty of any other vicious action, and by his obstinately persisting in it after all proper means have been used to reclaim him, shew or prove himself to be an unworthy member of Christ's Church, (as every tree is known and proved to be what it is by its fruit) and tho' such a behaviour may justify the particular Society of which such a man is a member, so far to censure him as to declare thus much of him, *viz.* that he is an unworthy member of Christ's Church; yet as in this case there is no judicial authority assumed or exercised, so neither is this what our Lord required should be done in the rule before laid down. The direction is, *Let him be to thee as an heathen man and a Publican*; that is, let him be to thee, with regard to thy esteem for him and thy behaviour towards him in thy private capacity, as an *Heathen* and a *Publican* is to a *Jew*, or as either of these would be to thee considering thy self as a *Jew*. The Hea-
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thens were no part of the Brotherhood among the *Jews*. And tho' the Publicans came under the denomination of *Jews* by their professing the *Jewish* religion, yet as they were employed by the *Romans* in gathering the taxes which the *Roman* government laid upon the *Jewish* nation, and which the *Jews* considered as a great oppression, and likewise considered the Publicans as greatly criminal by their employment in joining with the *Romans* in that oppression, so they each one in his private capacity esteemed and behaved towards those Publicans, not as if they were *Jews* or parts of their Brotherhood, but as if they were aliens and not *Jews*. This then seems to be the rule laid down by Christ, which his Disciples and Followers are to be guided by, *viz.* that when one Christian trespasseth against another, or is guilty of any other piece of wickedness, then the guilty person is to be admonished over and over in order to his reformation. But if he shall persist in his wickedness after all proper means have been used to reclaim him, then the Christian Brotherhood, each one in his private capacity, are to esteem him and behave towards him not as a Christian Brother, but as if he were not a Christian, tho' he still profess himself to be so. And as Christian admonition consists in representing to men the vileness and wickedness of their actions, and the consequences which will unavoidably

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follow either their obstinately persisting in them, or their repentance and reformation from them; that the former binds them over to God's just displeasure and future punishment, and the latter looses them from that band, and restores them to God's favour; so Christ assures us that this is what God will most certainly abide by: For whatever is thus bound on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever is thus loosed on earth shall be loosed in heaven. But then it is to be remember'd, that when the blameable person's fault is to be reported according to the directions given by Christ, the report is not to be made to the Parson, Bishop, or Overseer of the Christian Society to which he belongeth, but it is to the Society itself: *Tell it to the Church.* So likewise he is to be admonished by the Church, *but if he neglect to hear the Church, &c.* And supposing the Bishop or Pastor of the Church to be the immediate minister of this admonition, yet it is not to be considered as his act, but as the act of the Church, he being no more than the minister or representative of the congregation in this action. And

HERE, I think, it will be proper to observe, that as Christ laid the foundation for Christian Societies, that is, he laid the foundation for a religious sect that would be called after his name, as taking their rise from him; so he did this not barely to found such a sect, or engage men in such a profession,

fession, or that they might join together in
 publick worship, and thereby preserve and
 keep up the publick profession of his religion
 in the world; but also, and more especially,
 that they might be united together by a
 strong friendship and brotherly affection,
 and thereby be led to be companions for,
 help-mates to, and watchers over each other
 for their good, to bear one another's bur-
 thens, sympathize with, and comfort one
 another under the various afflictions and per-
 secutions they might meet with in and from
 the world; and, by a good example, pro-
 voke one another to love and good works.
 This was that great bond of union which
 Christ proposed that his disciples and fol-
 lowers should be held together by, and by
 which they should be known to the world:
By this shall all men know that ye are my
(viz. Christ's) disciples, if ye have love one to
another, John xiii. 35. So that men profes-
 sing Christianity may be united in the same
 Society with others in one respect, and yet
 be shut out of, or be no part of, that Soci-
 ety in another respect; that is, a man may
 be united to a Christian Society by profes-
 sing the same religious principles, and join-
 ing with them in the same acts of worship,
 and yet he may have no part nor lot in the
 Christian brotherhood; the rest of the mem-
 bers of that Society may each one, in his
 private capacity, shut him out of his com-
 pany, have no society or friendship with

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him,

him, but esteem him, and behave towards him, not as a Christian brother, but as a vicious and wicked man, and as if he were not a Christian. And in that respect he would be put out from among them, he would be put away and avoided by them, he would be shut out of, and would be no part of, that Society. And this is what our Lord seems to intend with respect to such Christians (or rather such persons who profess Christianity) who persist in their wickedness after all proper means have been used to reclaim them. Such persons may, if they please, continue to profess themselves Christians, and may attend Christian Assemblies when they pay their publick acknowledgments to God, Christ having commanded the Christian brotherhood to permit and suffer them so to do for the reason before mentioned. But then they are to be so far shut out of that brotherhood, as that the rest of the Society, each one in his private capacity, are to shun and avoid them, and to have no society or friendship with them. They must be to each of the Christian brotherhood as a Heathen or a Publican would be to a *Jew*.

THUS, Sir, from a view of the two passages of scripture which I have before recited, I think it plainly appears, what those rules and directions are which Christ hath given, and what kind of discipline he hath appointed should take place in Christian Societies;

cieties, with regard to such wicked persons who act unworthily and unsuitably to their Christian Profession (whether their fault be called heresy, or whatever name it may be distinguished by, it being not the name, but the thing or blameable action, which comes into the present question) *viz.* they are to be admonished again and again in order to their reformation: And if they persist in their wickedness after all proper means have been used to reclaim them, then each Christian, in his private capacity, must esteem them, and behave towards them, not as Christian brethren, but as vicious and wicked men, and as if they were not Christians. This is the excommunication, if it may be so called, which Christ hath appointed should take place in his kingdom. But then here it must stop, Christ not having delegated any power or authority to Christian Societies, much less to the Clergy, to proceed any farther; but, on the contrary, he hath forbidden that such excommunication, as consists in casting men wholly out of the church, should be exercised in his kingdom. It is one thing to exclude a wicked man out of the Christian brotherhood, by each Christian's shunning and avoiding the company and friendship of such a man; and it is another thing for a Christian Society, or any leader thereof, by a judicial act, wholly to exclude such a man from that Society, and cast him out of the Church. The former
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of these Christ hath required; the latter, upon just and good grounds, he hath forbidden; or at least this seems to be the case. And

As Christ appointed that Christians and Christian Societies should behave as above towards such wicked persons who profess Christianity, but whose lives are not influenced and governed by it; so agreeably hereto are the advices given by his Apostles to Christians, and to the Christian Societies which were gathered in their times. Thus *St. Paul* advised the Christians at *Rome*, *Romans xvi. 17, 18. Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.* Here we see that those wicked men *St. Paul* refers to were to be avoided, Christians were not to keep them company, or have any friendship with them; but then here is no authority to be assumed in the case, no judicial act of excommunication to take place, by which such wicked men were to be wholly cut off from the body of Christ. Again, *St. Paul* gives the same charge to the *Corinthian* Christians, *1 Cor. v. 11. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if a man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard,*

drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. This is repeated at verse 13, and applied to the incestuous person: *Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.* These words, *put away from among yourselves*, though they are very strong expressions, yet by a fair construction can signify no more, than that they should shun and avoid the company and friendship of the person referred to; that they should, each in his private capacity, shut him out of the Christian brotherhood; and that they should esteem him, and behave towards him, not as a Christian brother, but as if he were not a Christian. This, I say, by a fair construction, is all that the Apostle could be supposed to mean by putting away from among themselves the incestuous person, because this is the behaviour which *St. Paul* recommended at other times in like cases, and even in this very epistle just before, with respect to such Christian brethren as should be guilty of fornication, idolatry, drunkenness, &c. as at verse 11; and because the *Corinthian* Christians had not behaved thus towards this offender when it was their duty to have done so; and also because it is agreeable to the direction which Christ had given with relation thereto. The same charge *St. Paul* gives to the Christians at *Thessalonica*, 2 *Thes.* iii. 6. *Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walk-*
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eth disorderly, and not after the tradition which ye have received of us. Verse 14. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Thus again in St. Paul's epistle to Titus, chap. 1. ver. 10, 11, 12, 13. For there are many unruly and vain-talkers and deceivers, especially they of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things that they ought not for filthy lucre's sake. One of them, even a Prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. This witness is true; wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be found in the faith; that is, that they may be reformed. And if such rebuke should not have its effect in reforming those wicked men, then the Apostle's advice is, that they should be shunned and avoided, that they should be esteemed and treated not as Christian brethren, but as vicious and wicked men, and as if they were not Christians, tho' they profess themselves to be so. Chap. iii. ver. 10, 11. A man that is an Heretick after the first and second admonition reject, knowing that he that is such is subverted and sinneth, being condemned of himself. Here it is allowed by the Learned, that the word reject in the original is the same as to avoid; so that the charge to Titus is, that he should avoid the company and friendship of such a man as St. Paul referred to, that he should esteem

esteem him, and behave towards him, not as a Christian brother, but as if he were not a Christian. And as to the word *Heretick*, it can signify but little to enquire into its original signification, because it is not the name but the thing which is to be considered in the present case. Every one who for filthy lucre's sake (which was plainly the case St. Paul referred to) or to answer any other vile purpose to himself or others, does so grossly corrupt Christianity, as thereby to pervert the great and main design of the gospel of Christ, by rendering it inefficacious for the reforming the vices, and rightly directing and governing the affections and actions of men, such an one is, I think, an Heretick in the Apostle's sense, and ought to be rejected, that is, shunned and avoided, by every true Christian. Again, St. John's advice to the Elect Lady, upon a like occasion, is of the same kind, *John* ii. 9, 10, 11. *Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God; he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ he hath both the Father, and the Son. If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed, for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.*

As to what St. Paul saith of delivering over to Satan the incestuous *Corinthian*, this, I think, was not a judicial act, by which the sinner was excommunicated or cut off from

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the body of Christ, but rather an act of piety, as it was a solemn address to God; an act of justice to Christianity, as it was designed to remove the scandal which the offender, and the unsuitable behaviour of the *Corinthian* Christians towards him, had brought upon it; and an act of charity to the incestuous person, as it was kindly intended to bring him to repentance and reformation. And here, the better to understand the Apostle's meaning, it is to be observed, that God did, or at least *St. Paul* thought he did, in some particular instances afflict some Christians, and take away the lives of others, on account of some great and scandalous offences which they had been guilty of. Thus when the Apostle in his first epistle to those very *Corinthians*, chap. xi. verse 21, had complained of their intemperance at their love-feasts, in that one was hungry and another was drunken, which indisposed them for a right and proper remembrance of Christ in the Lord's Supper; and had likewise observed to them, *verse 29*, that by such their profanation of this ordinance they exposed themselves to the just displeasure of God; he adds, *ver. 30*, *For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.* And that the sickness and weakness which *St. Paul* refers to was not (in his opinion) the natural effect of the intemperance of those *Corinthians* who had been thus afflicted, but the immediate chastisement

chastisement of Almighty God, seems evident from the words which follow, *verses 31, 32. For if we would judge ourselves we should not be judged. But when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.* This, I think, shews plainly what St. Paul thought of this matter, *viz.* that God did in some particular instances afflict with sickness and weakness some Christians, and take away the lives of others, on account of the great and scandalous offences they had been guilty of. This being observed, the case seems to be as follows. There was in the Church of *Corinth* a notorious offender, *viz.* one who had committed such fornication as was not once named among the *Gentiles*, *viz.* that a man should have his father's wife, *1 Cor. v. 1.* This was a fault so justly blameable, as that of course it was a great scandal to Christianity. This was what the rest of the *Corinthian* Christians ought to have been ashamed of, and it is what they ought to have used their endeavours to reform their offending Brother from, by admonishing him over and over in order to bring him to repentance; and if they had failed of that, then they might, for any thing that appears to the contrary, have justly declared him to be an unworthy member of their Society. However, they ought to have avoided his company and friendship, and to have esteemed him, and behaved towards him, not as a Christian brother, but as if he

were not a Christian ; that thereby they might guard against being corrupted by him, and also protest against his wicked behaviour, and so remove or at least lessen the scandal, which had been brought upon Christianity by his means. But the *Corinthian* Christians were so far from acting towards this offender in the manner before mentioned, that on the contrary they seemed rather to countenance him in his wickedness, which added greatly to the scandal, *verse* 2. This, when taken together, was an extraordinary case ; that is, the fault of the incestuous person, and the unsuitable behaviour of the other Christians at *Corinth* towards him, were greatly scandalous to Christianity ; and this induced St. *Paul* to make use of an expedient, or an extraordinary remedy, (which he hoped would be effectual) in order to remove it ; *viz.* he desired the *Corinthians*, that when they should be assembled together as a Christian Society, in the name, or according to the appointment, of Christ, to pay their publick acknowledgments to God, where tho' he should be absent in person yet his mind would be as it were present with them, they would then offer up their request to God, that he would be pleased to lay some heavy bodily affliction upon the incestuous person, in confidence that the power of Christ would be present with them to afflict this offender, as it had been in
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afflicting others among them for their abuse of the Lord's supper (tho' in a more exemplary manner in the present case) in order to bring him to repentance, and thereby to remove the scandal from Christianity, which his offence and their unsuitable behaviour towards him had brought upon it, *ver. 3. 4, 5. For I verily, as absent in body but present in spirit, have judged already as tho' I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ when you are gathered together, and my spirit with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.* The petitioning God to lay some bodily and severe affliction upon the offender, is here called *delivering him to Satan*, in conformity to the language of those times, which was grounded upon an opinion that Satan was the instrument in inflicting diseases upon men. And thus St. Paul calls the *thorn*, which was *in his flesh*, the *messenger of Satan to buffet him*. And thus he delivered *Hymenæus* and *Alexander* unto Satan, that they might learn not to blaspheme. This is a fair and an intelligible account of the case, which is perfectly agreeable with the rest of the New Testament, and therefore it may justly be presumed that it is the true account of it. For to suppose that Satan and his power were so much at the call and disposal
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of the *Corinthian* Christians, as that he would by their order and appointment take to a wicked man, and afflict him, till he had brought him to repentance and amendment of life, or in order thereto, is to compliment Satan with more virtue and goodness than he is usually allowed to have.

THIS, Sir, seems to be the state of the case, according to the account which Christ and his Apostles have given of this matter. I am sensible it is commonly urged, that if Christians are so far to avoid the company and friendship of wicked men who profess Christianity, as not to eat with them at their ordinary meals, then much more ought they to exclude such men from joining with them in all acts of religious worship, because the reasons for such exclusion are stronger in the latter case than in the former. I answer, the reasons for excluding such wicked men from Christian Societies, whether in the former or in the latter case, or both, I think are these three, *viz.* first, to prevent being corrupted by them; secondly, to shame them, and thereby to bring them to repentance and amendment; and thirdly, to remove, or at least lessen, the scandal which is brought upon Christianity by their means: but all those ends may as well be answered by excluding such wicked men from the Christian brotherhood, as by casting them out of the Church. And first, to avoid being corrupted by wicked men, the proper means

means is to avoid the company of such men in private life, and not in acts of religious worship; because the danger of being corrupted arises from associating with them in the former and not in the latter case, as it is in the former, and not in the latter, that their vicious actions are known and practised. To join with such men in acts of religious worship is not likely to be hurtful in this respect; whereas to maintain friendship with them in private life is very likely to be so, as evil communications corrupt good manners. Secondly, to shame men for their wicked actions in order to bring them to repentance and amendment, the proper means is to shun and avoid their company in private life; because such a behaviour is a constant and standing reproof to them, it upbraids them of folly, and shews they are not worthy nor fit to be conversed with, and this tends to shame them and bring them to repentance; whereas the excluding such men from joining in acts of religious worship may have the contrary tendency, as it bars them from that which may be the means of their conversion. *If thou bring thy gift to the altar* (saith our Lord) *and there remembrest that thy brother hath ought against thee, &c.* which supposes that mens attendance on publick worship tends to lead men to serious reflection, to look back upon their past behaviour, and thereby to bring them to repentance and amendment if they have done

done amiss. It likewise supposes, that known offenders are at liberty to attend God's publick worship if they please. Thirdly, to remove, or at least lessen, the scandal brought upon Christianity by the wicked lives of those who profess it, the means is, that each Christian in his private capacity should shun and avoid their company, should shut them out of the Christian brotherhood; by which behaviour they would not only protest against the wicked actions of such men, but also disown their brotherly relation to them, and thereby would shew, that tho' such wicked men are among them, yet they are not of them, and that Christianity is not justly chargeable with their crimes; and this would remove, or at least lessen, the scandal brought upon Christianity by their means. Here we see that all those ends can well be answered without introducing that authority, that judicial power into Christian Societies, which Christ foresaw would be greatly injurious to his faithful subjects, and therefore has, or at least seems to have, forbid the use of it.

I am likewise sensible it may be urged, that all voluntary Societies are supposed to be invested with power to appoint the terms upon which men are to be entered into them, and to exclude such as do not keep up to those terms. To which I answer, that the supposition is not to be admitted in the present case; because as Christ is the founder of Christian Societies, so in all those

those things in which he has been pleased to give rules and directions to them, in all such things they are not to be their own directors, but, as Christian Societies, they are to follow the rules and directions left them by their founder. And tho' Christian Societies are, or at least ought to be, so far voluntary, as that it ought to be left to every man's choice whether he will be a Christian or not, and consequently whether he will be a member of any Christian Society or not, as Christ hath not invested any Christian, nor any Set or Order or Body of men among Christians, with power and authority to judge and determine for any other person or persons in these respects, or to force or compel men to be Christians, or Members of any Christian Society, without, or in opposition to, their own judgment or choice; I say, tho' Christians, and consequently the members of Christian Societies, are or ought to be so far voluntary and independent with regard to other men, yet they are not voluntary and independent with regard to Christ their master; but are obliged, as his disciples and the subjects of his kingdom, to be directed and guided by his laws, in all those instances in which he has been pleased to interpose and give directions to them; which is the present case. Christian Societies are supposed to be regulated and governed by the rules and directions left them by Christ their founder: For otherwise

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they do not properly come under that denomination; and therefore such Societies are not at liberty to appoint what terms they please, upon which men are to be admitted into them, and then cast men out if they do not keep up to those terms; but are obliged, as the subjects of Christ's kingdom, to be directed and governed, in these respects, by the rules and directions left them by their master. And as Christ has plainly shewn what are the grounds or qualifications of discipleship to him, so whoever has these qualifications, such an one has a right to Church-Communion, that is, to be a member of a Christian Society; and consequently whoever refuse such men Christian communion, such refusers in this act renounce their allegiance to Christ, and in effect say they will not have him to reign over them. How antichristian must it therefore be, for men to appoint terms of Christian communion which Christ hath not appointed, and to reject those he has. This is like the conduct of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* of old, who made void the commands of God by their traditions. And here, I think, it may not be amiss to observe, what a severe reproof our Lord gave those who made the commands of God to give place to the institutions and traditions of men (that is, the institutions and laws of the Church, to speak in the language of our own times.) Thus *Matt.* xv. from verse 1. to verse 10. *Then came to Jesus Scribes and Pharisees*

Pharisees which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders, for they wash not their hands when they eat bread? But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your own tradition? For God commanded saying, Honour thy father and thy mother; and he that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, and honoureth not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your traditions. Ye Hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you saying, This people draweth nigh to me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. This surely is justly applicable to our times, in which the Creeds and Constitutions of Churches (which are no other than the traditions of men) are made the ground-work of Christianity, and the test of mens Discipleship to Christ. So that now, tho' a man be a true believer in Jesus Christ, and submits himself to be governed by his laws, and consequently is a faithful subject of Christ's kingdom, yet if he does not come up to the Church's standard of Christianity, and does not submit to be governed by the Church's laws,

then all the former goes for nothing; he may notwithstanding be an Heretick, and fit to be cut off from the body of Christ. Good God! Is not this to make void the commandments of Christ by the traditions of men? *Well did Esaias prophesy of you saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*

I am also sensible, that tho' Christian Societies are in duty bound to follow the rules and directions left them by Christ their founder, yet there are many things relating to decency, order, and the like, (*viz.* such as appointing the time when, and the place where, they shall assemble together to pay their publick acknowledgments to God) concerning which Christ has not interposed to give any directions to them; in which cases it is absolutely necessary that some rules should be laid down and followed: For otherwise all the valuable ends of Christian Association cannot possibly be obtained. And as this must unavoidably be the case, the question is, Who must lay down those rules? And the true answer I think is, that it must be the respective Societies themselves; and that for these reasons. First, because they are the several Societies respectively who alone are interested in them, and therefore no other person or persons can possibly have
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a right of dominion over them in these respects; and consequently whatever rules of this kind are necessary to any Christian Society, the several members of that Society in their collective capacity, and they only, have a right to judge and determine for themselves with regard to those rules. Secondly, Christ hath expressly forbid that any authority or dominion should be exercised by the Subjects of his kingdom, considered as such, one over another; and consequently if any rules are necessary to be observed by a Christian Society, then that Society, or the several members of it in their collective capacity, and they only, have a right to appoint those rules. And agreeably to this is *St. Paul's* advice, *1 Cor. xiv. 40. Let all things be done decently and in order*, which advice was not given to any particular person or persons, but to the whole body of Christians at *Corinth*. As to the Clergy, they are set apart to be servants or ministers to the several Churches in which they are appointed to serve, and not to be masters over them, or lawgivers to them. And as to what is said, *Hebrews xiii. 17. Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls as those that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief*: This I think is best explained by a parallel case, *Matthew xxiii. 1, 2, 3. Then spake Jesus to the multitude and to his Disciples, saying, The Scribes*

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Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses's seat. All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do. Which is the same as if our Lord had said, The *Scribes* and *Pharisees* are become (through custom or otherwise, for it does not appear that they were by divine appointment) teachers of *Moses's* law; all therefore that they, from that law, shall make appear to you to be your duty, that observe and do. This is evidently the meaning of our Lord, because the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* are here considered as teachers of *Moses's* law, and not as lawgivers to the people, and because what was grounded only upon their authority, *viz.* their traditions, our Lord elsewhere condemns, and seems at least to justify his Disciples in the breach of them, when they eat bread with unwashen hands. In like manner Christian Pastors and Bishops are appointed to be Watchmen to the people, to exhort and stir them up to the practice of their duty, to dissuade them from doing what is evil, and the like; and it is the people's duty to submit or be obedient to them in that capacity, that is, it is the people's duty to attend to their instructions and admonitions, to practise what they make appear to be their duty, and carefully to avoid whatever they make appear to them to be their crime. This, I think, must be the meaning of the Apostle in the text before recited, because this is all the submission and obedience that is due to a watchman,

watchman; and because it is not to be supposed, that the Apostle would set up any authority in the Church in opposition to Christ's special charge and command to the contrary.

POSSIBLY it may be farther urged, that if this be a true representation of the case, then if Christianity be never so much corrupted, whether in doctrine, worship, or otherwise, such corruption must continue and be perpetuated thro' all generations, because there is no provision for, but rather an effectual bar is put to, all reformation. And this leads me to observe what rules and directions are given with relation thereto, *viz.*

THIRDLY, 2 Cor. vi. 17. *Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you.* Here St. Paul informs us what God hath declared should be done, when Christianity is so corrupted, either in doctrine, worship, or any other way, as that mens minds and consciences are defiled by it; namely, every faithful Christian must come out of, and separate himself from, such corruption, whether in doctrine, in worship, or otherwise, and from the Societies among whom such corruption takes place and prevails. And as he thereby enters his protest against such corruption, and does the best he can to reform it, so God will approve and justify his conduct herein. *Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean*

clean thing, and I will receive you. And tho' this is urged by the Apostle only to prevent the *Corinthian* Christians from being unequally yoked together with unbelievers, yet as the reason is the same, or rather stronger, in all such unions and associations by which the minds and consciences of Christians are defiled, therefore the divine direction mentioned by the Apostle must be applicable to all such cases. St. Paul indeed, in his Epistle to the *Romans*, chap. xvi. verse 17, besought them to *mark those who cause divisions and offences*; but then it is to be considered, that in the present case it is the corrupters of Christianity who cause divisions and offences, and not those who separate from and protest against such corruption. Such Separatists, or Schismaticks, are so far from being criminal or blameable, that on the contrary they are highly approved in the sight of God. *Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you.* And as it is the duty of every Christian to endeavour to reform such abuses of Christianity as aforesaid, by coming out of, and being separate from, such corruption, and from the Society in which it takes place; so every man is constituted a judge for himself, when and where such corruption does take place; because there is no other man, nor set, nor order, nor body of men
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among Christians, whom Christ hath constituted to judge for him in this respect.

THUS I have shewn what those rules and directions are, which Christ and his Apostles have given with regard to Christian Societies, and Church-Discipline; and likewise what must be done when Christianity is corrupted as aforesaid, in order to reform it from such corruption. Perhaps it may be farther urged, that excommunicating corrupt members from Christian Societies, and casting them out of the Church, was practised in the first and purest ages of Christianity; and therefore such excommunication must have been agreeable to the will of Christ in this respect.

I ANSWER, first, that if what I have observed above be a true representation of the case, then such excommunication, as consists in casting men out of the Church, could not be justifiable in any age, because Christ has plainly and expressly forbid the use of it; and has likewise backed the prohibition with the reason upon which it is grounded, which reason holds good in every age, as Christ intended the prohibition should which is grounded upon it. The tares must not be separated by excommunication from the wheat, but both must grow together in every age of the Church until the day of judgment, according to the commandment of Christ; and therefore the example of any age, how pure soever it may

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be supposed to be, cannot possibly justify the breach of so plain a law. Again:

I ANSWER, secondly, that the Apostolick age (which surely will be allowed to be the purest) was not free from corruption; and therefore excommunication might be a corruption of Christianity, tho' practised in that age. And thus we find it was complained of by St. *John* in his third Epistle, *verses* 9, 10. *I wrote unto the Church, but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore if I come I will remember his deeds which he doth, prating against us with malicious words, and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the Church.* Here we have the origin of excommunication, the principle it sprang from, and the effects of it; which were such as Christ foresaw, and in a manner foretold, it would have. *Diotrephes* was the first we read of that excommunicated his Christian brethren, and thereby opposed so plain a precept of Christ; and therefore I think we may fairly consider him as the beginner of this practice. This St. *John* shewed a great dislike of, and was determined to oppose him in it, tho' his opposition did not put an end to that practice, as the experience of after-ages has abundantly shewed. *Diotrephes* had many followers, and excommunication soon became frequent in the Christian Church, and it has been practised

practised more or less down to this time; tho' this is not to be wondered at, because when any kind of corruption has once taken place, it is not easily rooted out, especially when it serves to gratify the pride, ambition, and avarice of men; which is the present case. And as *Diotrephes* introduced excommunication, so it was his love of preeminence that led him to it. The principles, which excommunication sprang from, were pride and lust of power. This is what our Lord took all possible care to prevent from taking place in his Church. He gave it in charge that no Authority, Superiority, or Preeminence should take place among the Subjects of his kingdom. Thus *Matthew* xxiii. 8, 9, 10, 11. *But be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth, for one is your father which is in heaven. Neither be ye called master, for one is your master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. Luke* xxii, 24, 25, 26. *And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. And he said unto them, The Kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and they that exercise authority upon them are called Benefactors. But ye shall not be so; but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. Or as St. Matthew hath*

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it, chap. xx. verses 26, 27. *But it shall not be so among you, but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.* Which is the same as if he had said, There shall be no such thing as greater or lesser among the Subjects of my kingdom, except it be by a man's being of greater use and service to his brethren than others are. But pride and lust of power got the better of these precepts of Christ, and the *Diotrephites* soon prevailed. Those appointed to watch over Christian Societies for their good, thro' love of preeminence soon made themselves masters of those whom they were appointed to serve; and that has been too much the case ever since. And as pride and lust of power are the principles from which excommunication sprang, so (according as Christ foresaw, and for which reason he forbid it) sad have been the effects of it; good and virtuous men, or the faithful subjects of Christ's kingdom, have been the greatest sufferers by it. And this has been the case not only in the first instance of it by *Diotrephes*; but also thro' the several ages of the Church, great and terrible have the effects of the excommunicating power been to many honest good Christians.

THUS, Sir, I have represented the case to you in the plainest manner I can, and have shewn what appears to me to be the will of Christ touching this matter, which I beg
you

you will seriously and dispassionately consider; and that you will do it with a mind perfectly free from all love of preeminence, and from a thirst after worldly riches and grandeur, which have been the bane of Christianity; and then I trust it will be kindly accepted. All questions, in which the duty of Christians or the interest of Christianity are concerned, ought to be treated with the utmost fairness and freedom, in a decent manner, and with a Christian Spirit, suitable to the dignity and importance of the subject to which they are related; and therefore if it should be thought that what I have here offered is erroneous, yet I hope and expect, that those who shall so judge will endeavour to shew it to be such by reason and good argument, and not treat either me or it with contempt, or with names of reproach.

BEFORE I conclude I beg leave to observe, that true Christianity, or the gospel dispensation, is a scheme of providence intended and calculated not to gratify the pride and ambition, or avarice of any man, or order or body of men among Christians, by loading them with great power, dignity, and wealth; but it is a scheme of providence kindly intended and wisely calculated to reform the vices, and rightly to direct and govern the affections and behaviour, of mankind. In this view of it it is a beautiful and glorious dispensation, which is highly worthy of God to give, as he is the great and
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wise governor of the intelligent and moral world; and in this view of it it is likewise worthy of all acceptance among men. If it were seen in this view, it would be more easily and better understood, and this would be a safe guide to us in all our enquiries about it. And on the other side, if it be seen in the opposite view, *viz.* as a scheme of providence intended and calculated to gratify the pride, ambition, and avarice of a particular order or body of men among Christians, by loading them with great power, dignity and wealth; then of course it will become difficult to be understood, because then it will be the business of those, who are thus interested in it, to make it so; that thereby the rest of their fellow Christians may have the greater dependence upon them.

I WILL only add, that if what I have offered should give occasion to those accusers of their brethren, who read the writings of others only to find out matter for scandal and defamation, to represent me as endeavouring to destroy all spiritual discipline, and to root up the fences of the Church; then, as I have not in these papers advanced any thing of my own, (at least that does not appear to be the case,) but only shewn what those rules and directions are, which Christ and his Apostles have given to Christians and to Christian Societies, with regard to the point in hand; so such scandal

cannot

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cannot rest upon me, but must terminate upon them.

I AM, *Reverend Sir*, a Lover of Virtue and Truth, and a hearty Well-wisher to the Happiness and Well-being of Mankind both here and hereafter,

THO. CHUBB.

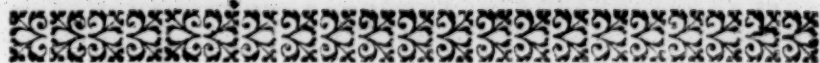


GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT COMMISSIONER
WASHINGTON, D. C.

REPORT OF THE DISTRICT COMMISSIONER
FOR THE YEAR 1900
IN RESPONSE TO A RESOLUTION OF THE DISTRICT COUNCIL
PASSED MAY 1, 1900

BY THE DISTRICT COMMISSIONER



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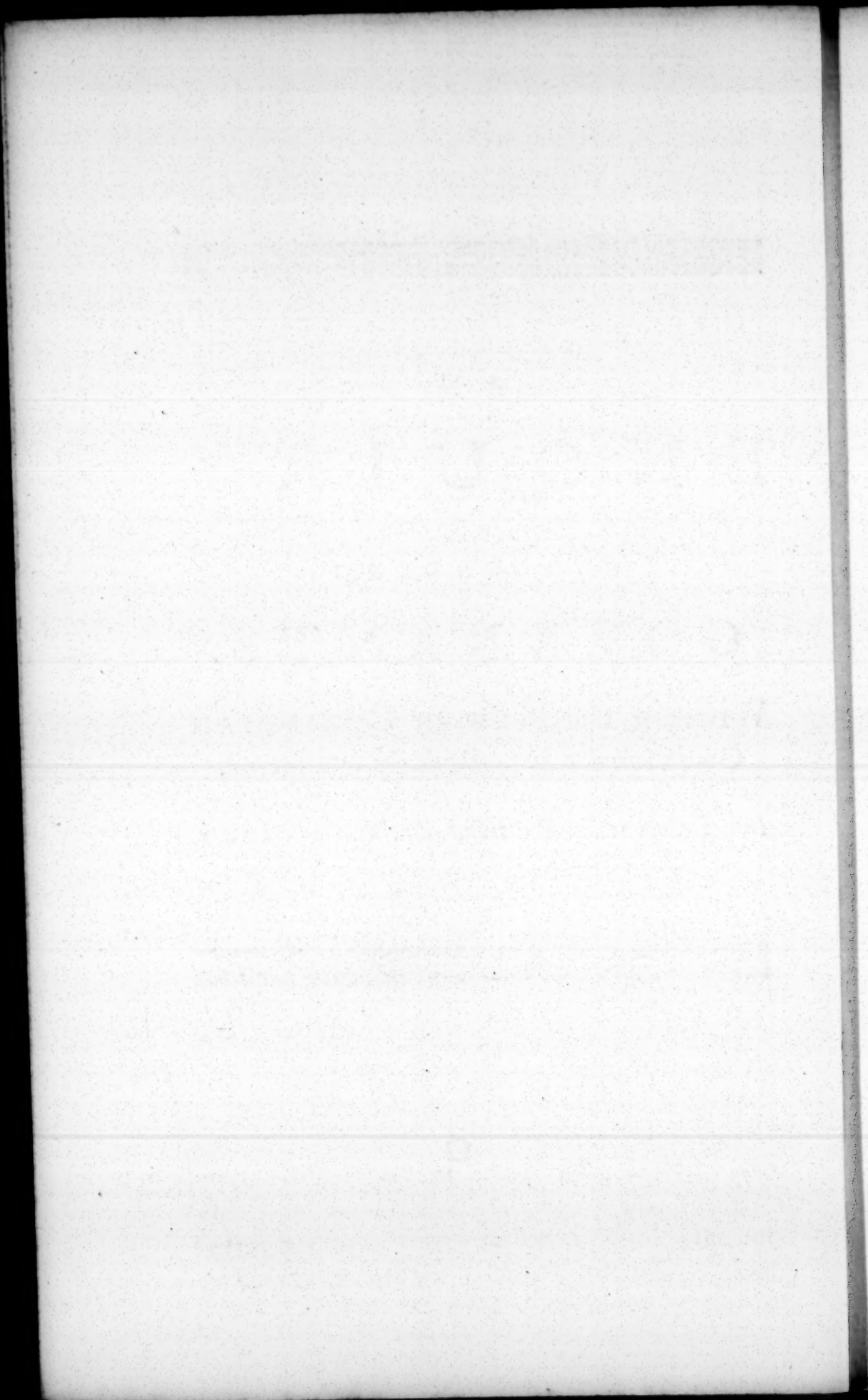
C O N C E R N I N G

C O V E N A N T S:

Wherein the N E W or C H R I S T I A N
C O V E N A N T is particularly considered.

In a Letter to the Reverend Dr. WATERLAND.







A N
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C O N C E R N I N G
C O V E N A N T S.

Reverend Sir,

AS your discourse concerning fundamentals has given occasion for the following reflections, so I beg leave to offer them to your most serious consideration. To be secure of God's favour and of the happiness of another world, surely are points of the greatest concern to every man; and therefore God could not shew his regard for the well-being of mankind in a better way, than by sending his Son into the world to set men right in this grand affair, by representing to them plainly and expressly what are the true and only grounds of their acceptance in his sight, and of sinners obtaining his mercy and forgiveness. And as Christ was thus *the way, the truth, and the life*, by plainly pointing out to men the true and only way to God's favour and life eternal; so he is by way of eminence called their *Saviour*. And whoever are any way

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subservient to this end, by helping and assisting men in their enquiry concerning it, or by prevailing upon them to walk in that path which leadsto life, such men, according to their measure and degree, may be said to be *workers together with Christ*, 2 Cor. vi. 1. But then whoever meddle in this matter ought to take great care that they do justice to the gospel of Christ, and to the Souls of men, lest they be found to be Subverters of the one, and Destroyers of the others, by preaching another Gospel than Christ hath preached, and by pointing out to men another way to God's favour and life eternal than Christ hath pointed out unto them; or by making that perplexed and difficult which Christ hath made plain and easy.

THE term *covenant*, when taken strictly and properly, and in the sense in which it is used among us, I think, signifies a *stipulation* or an *agreement* which two parties enter into, and by which they mutually engage themselves to perform something; and what they thus engage themselves to perform are called the *conditions of the covenant*. And as the conditions are not usually executed immediately upon making the covenant, but are to be performed, in whole or in part, in time to come; so such agreements are usually fully specified in writings called *indentures*, in order to shew hereafter what such covenant was, and thereby to prevent, if possible, any misunderstanding or misrepresentation with regard to it. And that it may fully
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appear in time to come, that the parties have thus covenanted, and thereby severally engaged themselves to perform what is particularly and fully specified in the indentures, something external is to be performed; *viz.* they declare it to be their own act and deed, and interchangeably set their hands and seals to such indentures, before proper persons as witnesses thereof; which indentures, declared, signed and sealed as aforesaid, become vouchers in time to come, and prove the truth and certainty of such covenant. Here it is to be remember'd, that the conditions and the seals of a covenant are not only distinct, but greatly different from each other; the conditions being essential to a covenant, whereas the seals are no more than proofs or witnesses to it. This account contains, I think, the full import of the word covenant, when taken strictly and properly, and in the sense it is used among us.

BUT when the term covenant is applied to God in the Scriptures, and he is said to covenant with his creatures, it is not always used in a strict and proper, but sometimes in a figurative sense; that is, the term *covenant* does not always signify a stipulation or an agreement, which God and his creatures have mutually entered into, and by which each party have engaged themselves to perform some things as the conditions of such covenant; but sometimes it signifies a promise made on the part of God to his creatures ;

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tures; and those to whom such promise was made, were by virtue of it in God's covenant, without any stipulation or agreement entered into. And as the term *covenant* sometimes signifies God's promise, so sometimes such promise was given absolutely without any condition, or without any previous qualification or suitableness in the subject to whom the promise was made; and sometimes it was limited to such condition, or such suitableness in the subject, as the promise required. And when the latter was the case, then such condition, or such suitableness in the subject as the promise was made to, may be called the condition of the covenant, tho' it was only required on the part of God, and was not stipulated on the part of man; because where such suitableness, or such condition, was wanting, the covenant or promise became void and of none effect. And when God at any time made such promise, or thus covenanted with his creatures, and annexed any thing external to it, to be a sign, token, or memorial of it, or when he required any external action to be performed to answer that purpose, such external thing or action was called the *token* of God's covenant, as it preserved the sense and remembrance of it upon the minds of his creatures. And in this view of it such token may be called the *seal* of God's covenant, as it did, in a remote sense, witness to it. And that this is sometimes intended

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intended by the terms *covenant*, and the *token* of the covenant, as applied to God in the Scriptures, is evident from the Scriptures themselves, where they treat of this matter. Thus,

Genesis ix, from verse the 8th to verse the 18th, *And I, behold I, establish my covenant with you and with your seed after you, and with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you, from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood, neither shall there be any more a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me, and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations. I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, and the bow shall be seen in the cloud: and I will remember my covenant which is between me, and you, and every living creature of all flesh: and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be seen in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between me, and all flesh that is upon the earth. And God said unto Noah,*
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This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth. Here we see, that the everlasting covenant, which God made with man and every living creature for perpetual generations, was not a stipulation or an agreement which God and his creatures mutually entered into, and by which each party engaged to do some things as the conditions of this covenant; but only an absolute unconditional promise made on the part of God to his creatures, by which promise those creatures are in this covenant, without any stipulation or agreement entered into; which promise was, that God would not any more bring the waters of a flood upon the earth to destroy all flesh, as he had done before. And that the memory of this promise might be perpetuated through all generations, God appointed the rainbow to be a sign, token, or memorial of it; that when it appeared in the cloud, and was seen by the fathers, they might relate God's promise (which the rainbow was made the token of) to their children, and they to their children, and so down to our latest posterity. This, I say, is the use of this sign; for as to God himself, he never forgets his promise, and therefore does not stand in need of such a remembrancer. And in this view of the case, the rainbow may be said to be the seal of God's covenant, not as if it obliged God to make good his promise, nor yet to remind him
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that such promise had been made; because God would remember and keep his promise, whether any such token were annexed to it or not; but as it reminds us that such promise has been made, and so, in a remote sense, witnesseth to it. And here the case is the same, whether the rainbow be the produce of those laws by which the natural and material world has been governed ever since the creation, or whether nature suffered a change to make way for it; because it is not a natural but an arbitrary sign or token of the promise it is annexed to, that is, the rainbow does not of itself shew that God will not drown the world, but it was arbitrarily made a token of that promise, in which God has declared that he will not do it. Again,

Genesis xii. 1, 2, 3. Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee, and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. Here we see that God's promises were twofold. First to *Abram's* seed; and these seem to be partly absolute, and partly conditional, viz. that he would give them the land of *Canaan* for an inheritance, that he would bless and

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make them a great nation, &c. And as God foresaw the great wickedness and degeneracy which the bulk of mankind would be sunk into in after-times, so secondly he promised *Abram*, that from him should descend, a person who should be their reformer, and consequently their Saviour. *And in thee* (that is, *in thy seed*, as it was expressed Chap. xxii. 18.) *shall all the families of the earth be blessed.* These promises made on the part of God, without any stipulation or agreement entered into either by *Abram* or his seed, or mankind, (to whom they were made) on the other part, are in other parts of the Scripture called God's covenant. Thus with regard to that promise made to *Abraham's* seed, it is in 2 Kings xiii. 23. called God's covenant with *Abraham*. *And the Lord was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant with* (that is, his promise made to) *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, &c.* So again with respect to God's promise to the rest of mankind through *Abraham's* seed, viz. that one should spring from him in whom all families of the earth should be blessed, that is likewise called a covenant, Gal. iii. 16, 17. *Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many, but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and*
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and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

Again:

The forementioned promise of God to *Abram's* seed is repeated at Chap. xvii. from the beginning to verse 15, and is called God's covenant. *And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God, walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant (that is, I will make good the covenant which I have made) between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold my covenant is with thee (that is, I have already engaged myself by promise to thee) and thou shalt be a father of many nations; neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham, for a father of many nations have I made thee, (or I will make thee) And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make many nations of thee, and Kings shall come out of thee, and I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. And God said unto Abraham,*

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Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou and thy seed after thee in their generations ; (which is the same as if it had been said, As I have made a promise to thee and to thy seed after thee, therefore do thou and thy seed after thee in their generations keep or preserve the remembrance of that promise, by a constant and perpetual use of the sign or token which I shall now annex to it for that purpose) this is my covenant which ye shall keep (or this is the token by which the memory of the covenant shall be perpetuated that I have made) between me and you and thy seed after thee, every man-child shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a token of the covenant between me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man-child in your generations; he that is born in the house, or bought with money of a stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised; and my covenant (or the token of my covenant) shall be in your flesh for (a memorial of) an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man-child, whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people (that is, when in the possession of Canaan, he shall lose his inheritance) he hath broken my covenant, (or forfeited his interest in it.) Here we see, that as God exhorted Abraham steadily to persevere in his duty, Walk before me and be thou perfect; so for his

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his encouragement herein he renewed his covenant with, or promises to, him. Which covenant was not a stipulation or an agreement, which God and *Abraham* had mutually entered into, and by which each party had obliged themselves to perform some things as the conditions of this covenant; but only promises made on the part of God, which promises were (I think) partly absolute, and partly conditional; *viz.* that God would give to *Abraham's* seed the land of *Canaan*, &c. And that this covenant (that is, the knowledge of God's promises) might be perpetuated, God appointed that a mark should be upon their flesh, every male should be circumcised, as a token or a memorial of it. And that this mark might be continued, and not be dropped or laid aside by them, and thereby the sense and remembrance of God's promises be lost among them, God appointed that upon whomsoever this mark was wanting, that soul should be cut off from his people; that is, he should have no share in the promise, he should have no inheritance in *Canaan* amongst his brethren. And tho' by a figure of speech circumcision is here called the covenant, yet strictly speaking it was not the covenant, but only a sign, token, or memorial of it. And thus it is expressed verse 11. *And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.* And thus it was understood by *St. Paul*, *Rom. iv. 11.* *And he (viz. Abraham) received*

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Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou and thy seed after thee in their generations; (which is the same as if it had been said, As I have made a promise to thee and to thy seed after thee, therefore do thou and thy seed after thee in their generations keep or preserve the remembrance of that promise, by a constant and perpetual use of the sign or token which I shall now annex to it for that purpose) this is my covenant which ye shall keep (or this is the token by which the memory of the covenant shall be perpetuated that I have made) between me and you and thy seed after thee, every man-child shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a token of the covenant between me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man-child in your generations; he that is born in the house, or bought with money of a stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised; and my covenant (or the token of my covenant) shall be in your flesh for (a memorial of) an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man-child, whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people (that is, when in the possession of Canaan, he shall lose his inheritance) he hath broken my covenant, (or forfeited his interest in it.) Here we see, that as God exhorted Abraham steadily to persevere in his duty, Walk before me and be thou perfect; so for his

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his encouragement herein he renewed his covenant with, or promises to, him. Which covenant was not a stipulation or an agreement, which God and *Abraham* had mutually entered into, and by which each party had obliged themselves to perform some things as the conditions of this covenant; but only promises made on the part of God, which promises were (I think) partly absolute, and partly conditional; *viz.* that God would give to *Abraham's* seed the land of *Canaan*, &c. And that this covenant (that is, the knowledge of God's promises) might be perpetuated, God appointed that a mark should be upon their flesh, every male should be circumcised, as a token or a memorial of it. And that this mark might be continued, and not be dropped or laid aside by them, and thereby the sense and remembrance of God's promises be lost among them, God appointed that upon whomsoever this mark was wanting, that soul should be cut off from his people; that is, he should have no share in the promise, he should have no inheritance in *Canaan* amongst his brethren. And tho' by a figure of speech circumcision is here called the covenant, yet strictly speaking it was not the covenant, but only a sign, token, or memorial of it. And thus it is expressed verse 11. *And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.* And thus it was understood by *St. Paul*, *Rom. iv. 11.* *And he (viz. Abraham) received*

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ceived the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had being yet uncircumcised. The promise of God to, or his covenant made with, *Abraham*, was when *Abraham* was in uncircumcision; and God required him to receive circumcision as a sign, token, or memorial of that covenant. And,

HERE it is to be remember'd, that tho' God's promise was made to *Abraham's* seed, yet it was not to all his seed, but was limited to the Off-spring of *Isaac*. Thus at verses 20, 21. *And as for Ishmael I have heard thee; behold I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve Princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, &c.* Neither was the promise made to all the seed of *Isaac*, but only to the posterity of *Jacob*, as in *Gen. xxv. 23.* *And the Lord said unto her, (viz. Rebekah) Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other, and the elder shall serve the younger; that is, the posterity of the elder shall give place to the posterity of the younger, with respect to the covenant or promise which God had made to *Abraham* their father, to give his seed the land of *Canaan* for an inheritance: and that this was the case, the event shewed. The fore-mentioned covenant or promise God likewise renewed*

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renewed to *Isaac*, as in *Gen.* xxvi. 3, 4. and also to *Jacob*, Chap. xxxv. 11, 12. Again,

It is farther to be remember'd, that when a person was circumcised (which generally was not the person's own act, but rather the act of him who had authority over him) he did not hereby personally enter into covenant with God, but only receive a mark upon his flesh, (with regard to which most persons were passive) which mark was only a sign, token, or memorial of that promise which God had made to *Abraham's* seed, confined to the Posterity of *Jacob*. I say, that by a person's being circumcised he did not hereby personally enter into covenant with God, but only received a mark upon his flesh, as a token of that covenant or promise which God had made to the Offspring of *Jacob*, in the person of *Abraham* their father. And accordingly *Abraham* was required, not only to be circumcised himself, but also to circumcise every male that he had authority over, whether born in his house, or bought with his money, tho' they were not included in that covenant, which circumcision was made the token of. And thus we find not only that *Abraham* himself was circumcised, but also that he took (*Gen.* xvii. 23.) *Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin: tho' not any of them*

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them were included in the covenant, nor received any advantage from it, either in their persons or in their posterities; for as to *Isaac*, he was not yet born: And this must afterwards have been the case of many others. And as circumcision was made the token of that covenant or promise which God had made to *Abraham*, as aforesaid; so the better to secure the use of it, and thereby to preserve the memory of that covenant (and as parents are generally very careful to secure the temporal interest of their children) God appointed that every male child should be circumcised at eight days old; and that upon whomsoever this token was wanting (of the Posterity of *Jacob*, to whom the promise was made, when in the possession of the promised land) such person should forfeit his interest in the covenant, and such want should be deemed a breach of it. But no man could possibly break a covenant, or forfeit his interest in it, that had not been previously entered into it. And this shews that circumcision, according to the original institution, as it was appointed by God, was not to the person who received it a personal covenanting with God, but only, and at most, a token of a covenant which the circumcised person was entered into, and interested in, antecedently to his circumcision. Indeed in after-times, when the people of *Israel* were in possession of the promised land, circumcision became a
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mark or badge of the *Jewish* religion; and accordingly, whoever was profelyted to that religion, and was circumcised, did, by his receiving that mark upon his flesh, make profession that he was a *Jew*, and consequently that he looked upon himself obliged to observe the *Jewish* law. And thus *St. Paul* told the *Galatians*, that if a man be circumcised, he is a debtor to do the whole law; that is, by submitting to this rite in obedience to the *Jewish* law, he professed himself to be a *Jew*, and as such he was obliged to keep the whole law: *Galatians* v. 3. Not that circumcision did of itself lay a man under this obligation; but only as he by this professed himself to be a *Jew*, therefore he was obliged as aforesaid. For when *St. Paul* took and circumcised *Timothy*, *Acts* xvi. 3. he did not do it that thereby *Timothy* might be obliged to keep the whole *Jewish* law, but only that the Apostle might avoid the censure of the *Jews* who were in those quarters. Neither did *Timothy* by being circumcised become obliged to keep the whole law, because he did not submit to this painful rite in obedience to the *Jewish* law, but only to screen the Apostle from censure, as aforesaid. Whenever a man professed himself to be a *Jew*, whether by being circumcised in obedience to the *Jewish* law, or by keeping the *Jews* Sabbath after the manner of a *Jew*, or any other way, by such profession he acknowledged his obligation

tion to observe the *Jewish* law. But then I think it is very improper to say, that every time, and in every action, in which a man made profession that he was a *Jew*, he either made or renewed a covenant with God, or that such a profession was the seal of God's covenant; because God's covenant consisted in his giving his promises to his people, and a rule of action for them to walk by, as the condition of those promises. I say, that God's covenant consisted only in these things, and not in any personal promise or profession, which his people might make concerning them. Again:

Exodus xxvii. 28. And the Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words; for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee, and with Israel. And he was with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread nor drink water; and he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten Commandments. Here we see, that the giving to the people of *Israel* a rule of action, for them to direct their behaviour by, is called making a covenant with them; which supposed, that if they paid obedience to this law, then God would make good the promises that he had made to their fathers; and this was without any stipulation or agreement at all. And the two tables, upon which this law was written, are called the tables of the covenant; and the sabbath was appointed to be kept as
a token

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a token of this covenant: And this is referred to in other parts of the Scripture, as the covenant which God made with *Israel*, when he brought them out of the land of *Egypt*. Moreover, when the people of *Israel* in after-times were obedient to this law of God delivered to them by *Moses* in the ten commandments, they were then considered as being in his covenant; and when they became a disobedient people, they were then considered as breaking God's covenant; and all this was without any stipulation or agreement entered into. Again:

Numbers xxv. 12, 13. Wherefore say, Behold I give unto him (viz. Phinehas) my covenant of peace. And he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting Priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the Children of Israel. Here we see that the covenant of an everlasting Priesthood, which God made with *Phinehas*, and with his seed after him, was not a stipulation or an agreement which the two parties entered into, but only a promise on the part of God, by which he gave or appointed *Phinehas* to the Priesthood, and promised the continuance of it to his issue, so long as they behaved as they ought, and thereby render'd themselves worthy of that office. This previous condition or suitableness in the subject, viz. a right behaviour, tho' it was not expressed, yet it was implied in the promise,

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as is evident from God's cutting off *Eli*'s house from the Priesthood on account of the wicked behaviour of his sons, 1 Samuel ii. 30. *Wherefore the Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house and the house of thy fathers should walk before me for ever; but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me, for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.* And here it is to be observed, that as God's promise to *Phinehas* and his house is called God's covenant with them, so this covenant had no visible sign or token annexed to it; which shews, that such outward marks or tokens are not necessary parts of, but mere appendixes to, such covenants.

WHAT I have here observed, I think, is sufficient to shew, that generally, when God in the Scriptures is said to covenant with his creatures, it was not a stipulation or an agreement which the two parties entered into, and by which they mutually engaged themselves to perform some things as the conditions of such covenant; but only, and at most, it was a revelation of God's will to mankind, containing a rule of action for man to walk by, and God's promise annexed to the observation of it. This was all that was included in the term *covenant* in the instances I have given above; and in one of them at least there was not so much, that is, it was an absolute promise, without any condition or previous qualification annexed

nexed to it. And accordingly those to whom such revelation was made, and such promise was given, were by virtue of it in God's covenant, and so continued whilst they lived in obedience to the law, without any personal entering into or renewing their covenant with God, that is, without coming into any formal bargain or agreement with their maker.

AND as this was evidently the case with respect to most of the covenants, which, in the old testament, God is said to have made with his creatures, so the case is the same with regard to that new covenant, which God is said to have made with mankind by the ministry of his Son, and of which Christ is said to be the Mediator: This new covenant being no other than a revelation of God's will concerning us, wherein men are informed what are the true and only grounds of their acceptance with God, and of sinners obtaining the divine mercy, and what will be the certain consequences of mens becoming the proper objects of God's favour, or of their continuing to be the proper objects of his just displeasure. And whoever comes to the knowledge of this revelation, and answers the true intent and purpose of it, by repenting and turning to God, and doing works meet for repentance, in denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and by living a godly, a righteous, a sober and a benevolent life, such an one is strictly and properly
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in God's covenant, without any stipulation or agreement entered into. Whether a man's persuasion of the truth of the aforesaid revelation be grounded on written or oral tradition, or by what way or means he came by his information, it mattereth not. For if the end of that revelation be truly answered upon a man, by his being persuaded of its truth, and by that persuasion's having its proper effect and influence upon his mind and life, then he is strictly and properly in God's covenant; because God's promises are made to the end, and not to the way or means by which that end was brought about. And that this is the truth of the case is evident as well from what was foretold of it in the old testament, as from what is recorded of it in the new.

THUS *Jeremiah xxxi. 31, 32, 33, 34.* *Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, (which my covenant they brake, altho' I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord.) But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people; and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour,*

neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

This, I think, is allowed to be a prophecy of that favour which God would give to mankind in and by the gospel of Jesus Christ, and of the previous qualifications which should render men the objects of this grace, *viz.* he would make such plain discovery of his will, and of the true and only grounds of acceptance in his sight, and of the benefits which would attend mens sincere endeavours to please him, as that there should be no occasion for men to be enquiring of and teaching each other what is the will of God, and what are the true grounds of acceptance in his sight, and what will be the consequence of acting agreeably with, or contrary to, his laws; because those things would be plainly and expressly revealed to, and set before them. And upon whomsoever this Gospel should have its proper effect, by commanding and governing not only the outward behaviour, but also the hearts and affections of men, to such God would grant the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting. This is that covenant that God would make with the house of *Israel*, and with the house of *Judah*, and indeed with all mankind; and tho' life everlasting is not expressed, yet it is implied in the forementioned
covenant

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covenant or promise. Here we see, that the favour which God vouchsafed to mankind by Jesus Christ, and particularly to the houses of *Israel* and *Judah*, as it was to be offered particularly to them by the ministry of his Son, is called *making a covenant* with them, tho' there is no stipulation or agreement entered into by the parties concerned, but only the promise of God made to mankind upon the conditions aforesaid. And it is called a *new covenant*, as it promised not what God had promised of old to the posterity of *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, viz. the land of *Canaan* for an inheritance, but the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting. Here we likewise see, that in this new covenant God's will concerning us, and the grounds of our acceptance in his sight, would be so plainly and expressly revealed, as that he that runs may read them; and these things would be so intelligible and easy to be understood, as would be level to all capacities. Under the gospel dispensation there would be no occasion for one neighbour to teach or call upon another to know the Lord (that is, to know their duty, and what will render them pleasing to their maker) because all would, or might, know him from the least to the greatest. But then tho' this was in fact the case when the gospel covenant was first promulged, and when it appeared in its native simplicity, yet since the men of this world have had the explaining it,
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who have had their advantages to make upon the weakness and ignorance of the people, the case has been greatly otherwise. For according to the representation which has been given of this new covenant, it is a collection and composition of the most profound mysteries, which require the most refined understanding and the greatest skill in metaphysics to discern them, and to have a clear and distinct perception of the most subtil distinctions that are couched under them. Alas! who is there among us that has such a clear and distinct perception of the following proposition, *viz. The Father is eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal, and yet there are not three eternals, but one eternal*; as not to be in danger of splitting upon one or other of these rocks, *viz.* of confounding the persons on the one side, or of dividing the substance on the other; that is, of believing that there is but one individual, eternal, intelligent, all-powerful agent or being on the one side, or that there are three distinct, eternal, intelligent, all-powerful agents or beings on the other side? This, I say, requires the most refined understanding and the greatest skill in metaphysics clearly to discern and distinguish; and yet the distinguishing and discernment of this, and many other such like mysteries, are considered as necessary conditions of the Christian Covenant. In this view of the case, tho' it be a matter of the utmost concern to every man to know

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the Lord, and consequently it is a thing very desirable that every man should be teaching and helping his brother and his neighbour in so necessary an affair, yet it must of necessity be generally omitted, or done to no good purpose, because it would generally be above mens ability to perform. And supposing a man were desirous of information in the present case, then he might not only go from brother to brother, and from neighbour to neighbour, but also from parish to parish, before he could get any reasonable ground of satisfaction, if he did at all; because there is not one in a thousand, if that, capable of giving it, tho' perhaps the most weak and ignorant do constantly (like parrots) repeat the sentences by which those mysteries are expressed, without having any ideas annexed to their words, and are likewise capable of, and are too often disposed to exercise, a blind and bitter zeal for or against what they do not in the least understand. But surely this cannot be the true state of the case with regard to that new covenant the Prophet speaks of, in which they should teach no more *every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith the Lord.* And

As the new covenant, which God would make with his creatures, is thus described in the old testament, so agreeable to this is what is recorded of it in the new. That revelation of God's will first published by

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by Jesus Christ, and afterwards by his Apostles, was what the body of mankind were greatly interested in; and therefore it is characterized by the term *Gospel*, or *the good news*. And as the principal things promised in this revelation, or new covenant, were, that God would grant unto men the forgiveness of their sins and life everlasting, upon condition they would repent and amend their ways; so this new covenant is likewise characterized by those terms, *viz.* the *doctrine of repentance and remission of sins*; these characters, *viz.* the gospel and the doctrine of repentance and remission of sins, being used by Christ himself to express one and the same thing, namely, the new covenant, or that revelation of God's will which was published by his ministry. And that this is the case, see *Mark xvi. 15.* *And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature*; compared with *Jeremiah xxxi. 31, 32, 33, 34.* as mentioned above, and *Luke xxiv. 45, 46, 47.* *Then opened he their understandings that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations.* Here Christ informs us, that the gospel, or that new covenant of favour which God made with and proclaimed to mankind by his ministry, and which had been spoken of in the Scriptures, was no o-

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ther than the doctrine of repentance and remission of sins. This good news was what mankind greatly needed to be informed of and instructed in, and therefore it behoved Christ, as he had undertaken to be their Saviour, and as he had been put to death, and thereby an end had been put to his ministry, to rise again from the dead, and to commission and send forth his Apostles to preach the gospel to all nations, which he had preached to the single nation of the *Jews* in his own person. The bulk of mankind by their vicious and wicked lives had rendered themselves the objects of God's just displeasure; and they were so far sunk in their understandings, as to have but little sense either of their folly or their danger. This being the case, God sent his Son into the world to awaken in men a just sense of their folly, to apprise them of their danger, and to shew them the only sure way by which they may escape it, and also secure to themselves God's favour and their future happiness, *viz.* by repenting and turning to God, and doing works meet for repentance, as aforesaid. But tho' this gospel, this doctrine of repentance and remission of sins, was to be preached to all (as good and bad men are generally every where mixed together) yet they were the wicked and vicious only which were immediately interested in it, according to Christ's declaration, *Mark ii. 17. They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not*

to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.
And

As it behoved Christ, who was constituted to be the Saviour of mankind, to take care that this good news, this doctrine of repentance and remission of sins, should be preached to all nations; so he acted accordingly. *Mark xxvi. 15, 16. And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.* Which is the same as if he had said, As I am going to leave the world, I therefore give it you in charge, that you go out into the several parts of it, and preach to all, both *Jews* and *Gentiles* without distinction, the gospel, *viz.* the doctrine of repentance and remission of sins; he that believeth, and, in consequence of that belief, becomes my true Disciple, (which baptism is made the outward sign or token of) shall be saved; but he that believeth not, or doth not so believe as to become my true Disciple, but still persists in his wickedness, such an one shall, or will, in consequence of his wickedness, continue under God's displeasure, or be damned. Baptism was antiently used as an outward mark or sign of Discipleship; so that the person baptized thereby publicly professed himself to be the Disciple of some master. Thus the followers of *John* the Baptist were baptized, and thereby gave testimony of their being
discipled

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discipled to *John*. And thus the followers of Christ were baptized, and thereby professed their Discipleship to him. And therefore when in the Church of *Corinth* the professors of Christianity distinguished themselves one from another, by one saying, *I am of Paul*; another, *I am of Apollos*, &c. 1 Cor. i. 12, 13. the Apostle puts those questions to them, *Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you, or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?* Which reasoning supposed that they had been discipled but to one master, viz. Christ. And at verses 14, 15. he thanked God that he had *baptized none of them save Crispus and Gaius, lest any should say that he had baptized in his own name*, that is, discipled men to himself. So that the promise is not made to baptism, but to a man's being Christ's true disciple, which baptism is made the outward sign or token of; the sign (by a figure of speech commonly used in those times) being put for the thing signified. Neither is the promise made to believing, considered simply as such, but to such believing as issues in Discipleship to Christ. So that it is not barely believing the gospel, but becoming Christ's true Disciple in consequence of that belief, which is the ground of mens salvation. Neither is it bare infidelity, but it is mens obstinately continuing in their sins, which is the ground and cause of their damnation. Christ every where considered mens obedience to God's law

law as the ground of their acceptance in his sight, and their disobedience or wicked lives as the ground and cause of their damnation. He that heareth Christ's sayings, and doth them, is the only wise man, who safely builds his house upon a rock; but he that hears these sayings, and doth not act accordingly, even tho' he should be fully persuaded of their truth, such an one shews his folly, by building his house upon the sand, that is, by trusting to that which will most certainly deceive him. *Matthew* vii. 24,---26.

St. Matthew likewise gives an account of that strict charge which Christ gave his Apostles, to preach his gospel to all nations. Indeed *St. Matthew*, with regard to one point, is very different from all the rest of the new testament, *viz.* he represents Christ as commanding his Apostles to baptize or disciple men *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*. But this text surely must have been abused by an addition of the words I have recited; and this seems to me to have been the case for two reasons: First, as baptism is the mark or sign of Discipleship to some master, so it is preposterous to baptize men in, or into, any other name than the name of him they are disciplined to, or who is their master. And as it is Christ only, and not the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who is represented in the new testament to be the master or head of the body the Church, and the members

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members of this body are considered as members of the body of Christ only, and not as members of the body of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; so it must be greatly preposterous to baptize men in, or into, the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and not in, or into, the name of Christ. Secondly, the first Christians did not act agreeably to this command, by baptizing or discipling men in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; but, on the contrary, they baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Thus *Acts* viii. 16. *Only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.* Chap. xix. 5. *When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.* And when this subject is any where treated of by the Apostles, their reasoning upon the case supposes, that Christians were then baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and not in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Thus *Rom.* vi. 3. *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death.* *Galatians* iii. 23. *For as many of you, as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.* Here, I think, it is most apparent, that the Apostolick practice was to baptize men in the name of, or disciple them to Christ, and not to baptize them in the name of, and disciple them to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. But surely the Apostles would not act so contrary to the command of Christ; and therefore I think it may fairly be presumed, that the

text

text has been abused by an addition of the words referred to. And

As the new Testament is no other than that revelation of God's will, which was made to mankind by the ministry of Jesus Christ, so whatever attended that ministry, which witnesseth to it that it was of God, may be said to be a seal of this Covenant; like as the conversion of the *Corinthians* to Christianity by St. *Paul's* ministry was to them a witness or seal of his Apostleship.

1 Cor. ix. 2. *If I am not an Apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you; for the seal of my Apostleship are ye in the Lord.* And thus the miraculous power, which the history sets forth as attending Christ's ministry, was a witness to, or a seal of, this new Covenant. And thus likewise Christ's laying down his life in consequence of, and in the defence of his ministry, made his blood once shed to be a witness to, or a seal of, this covenant. And thus it is represented by Christ himself, *Mark* xiv. 23, 24. *And he took the cup; and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new Testament, which is shed for many.* These words, together with what the other Evangelists and St. *Paul* inform us Christ added to them, I think, are justly paraphrased in the following manner. And he (*viz.* Christ) took the cup, which had been filled with wine for that purpose; and when

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he had given thanks and praise to God for his bountiful providence, then he gave it to his Disciples, and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is to be, in time to come, a memorial of my blood, which will be shed for the benefit of mankind; the shedding of which will be a witness of, or a seal of, that new testament, or covenant, which God hath made with mankind by my ministry, in or by which covenant they have full assurance of the remission of their sins upon their repentance and reformation. Do this, as oft as ye shall drink, in remembrance of me as your Lord and Master, as your guide and director, as your great exemplar, and as your chiefest friend and benefactor; and do you so take care to remember me in this institution, as in the use of it to be conformed more and more to my likeness; then will you truly answer the end and purpose of this memorial, and then you will be my Disciples indeed, and the faithful subjects of my kingdom. These then are the seals of this new covenant, *viz.* the miraculous power which attended Christ in the exercise of his ministry, and the shedding of his blood as witnessing to it. As to baptism, this is not in itself, nor was it intended to be, a seal or witness to this covenant, but only an outward mark or sign of a person's Discipleship to Christ, by which the person baptized professed to take Christ for his master, and that he was obliged

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ged to frame and fashion his mind and life according to Christ's example, and agreeably to those rules and principles of action which Christ had recommended to, and set before, him. And as to the Lord's supper, this is not in itself, nor was it intended to be, a seal or witness to this new covenant, but only a memorial of Christ, by which a lively and affecting sense of him was intended to be preserved and kept alive in the minds of his people, to answer the purpose aforesaid. So that to consider these institutions as the seals of the new covenant, or as that by which men personally enter into and renew their covenant with God, these have no foundation in the nature of the institutions themselves, nor in what Christ has said concerning them, but are grounded only on the doctrines and traditions of men. Indeed whenever a man professes himself to be a Christian, whether it be by being baptized, or by partaking of the Lord's supper in obedience to the command of Christ, or any other way, whether by words or actions, by such profession he acknowledges his subjection to Christ, and his obligation to be governed by Christ's laws; but then it will be very improper to say, that every time, and in every action, in which a man professes himself a Christian, he either makes or renews his covenant with God; because the Christian Covenant consists in that revelation of God's will, which was once made to mankind by

Jesus Christ, in which revelation God has promised men the forgiveness of their sins and life everlasting, upon condition they repent and amend their ways. I say, the new or Christian Covenant consists in these things only, and not in any personal promise or profession men may make concerning them. God's Covenant or Promise stands good, and is the same, whether men promise or profess any thing concerning it or not; and mens promises and professions do neither add to nor take from that Covenant, nor make any alteration in the case. It is mens actual performance of the conditions of God's promises, which alone enters them into and interests them in God's Covenant, and not their professing that they do perform them, or promising that they will do so. A man by being baptized professes himself to be Christ's Disciple: now it is not his baptism, but it is his being Christ's true Disciple (which baptism is made a mark or badge of) which enters him into, and interests him in, God's Covenant. Baptism, I think, is rather a profession of what a man is, than a promise of what he will be; like as if a man should declare that he is a Christian, by which declaration he rather professes what he is to-day, than promises what he will be to-morrow: not but whether baptism be considered as a promise or a profession, or both, it alters not the case; because baptism does not enter a man into, nor interest him in, God's Covenant, but these arise only and wholly from his

his being Christ's true Disciple, which baptism is only an outward sign or token of.

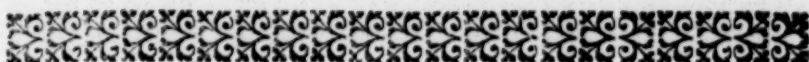
THUS, Sir, I have given a plain, and I think a fair and true, representation of that Covenant, which by way of distinction and preference is called the *new Covenant*, the *Christian* or *Gospel* Covenant, and the like; which representation is taken from what was foretold of this Covenant in the old Testament, and from what is recorded of it in the new. The sum of the matter is this, *viz.* the new Covenant is not a stipulation or an agreement which God and his Creatures mutually entered into, and by which each party engage themselves to perform some things as the conditions of this Covenant; but it is that revelation of God's will which was once made to mankind by the ministry of Jesus Christ, in which revelation are plainly and clearly set forth what are the true and only grounds of mens acceptance with God, and of sinners obtaining the divine mercy, and likewise what will be the undoubted consequences either of mens obstinately continuing in their sins, or of their repentance and reformation from them. This is the new or Gospel Covenant, the seals of, or witnesses to, which were the miraculous power which attended Christ in the exercise of his ministry, and that blood which he shed in the defence and confirmation of it. And whoever is so persuaded of the truth of this revelation, as to answer the true intent and purpose of it,
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in repenting and turning to God, and doing works meet for repentance, by denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and by living a godly, a righteous, a sober, and a benevolent life, such an one is strictly and properly, and to all intents and purposes, in God's Covenant, without coming to any formal bargain, or stipulating terms and conditions of agreement with his maker.

ALL that I shall farther observe is, that if what I have before laid down be a true representation of the Christian Covenant, then I think there can be no place for all those distinctions and divisions you have run into with regard to this subject; and that what you have offered to the world upon this head will be so far from assisting and helping men in their enquiries concerning this grand affair, that on the contrary it will rather tend at least to perplex and confound weak minds, if not to mislead and deceive them. This surely calls for your most serious consideration and attention, and which I hope and presume you will afford it.

I AM, *Reverend Sir*, a sincere friend to, and a lover of, virtue and truth, and a hearty well-wisher to mankind,

THO. CHUBB.



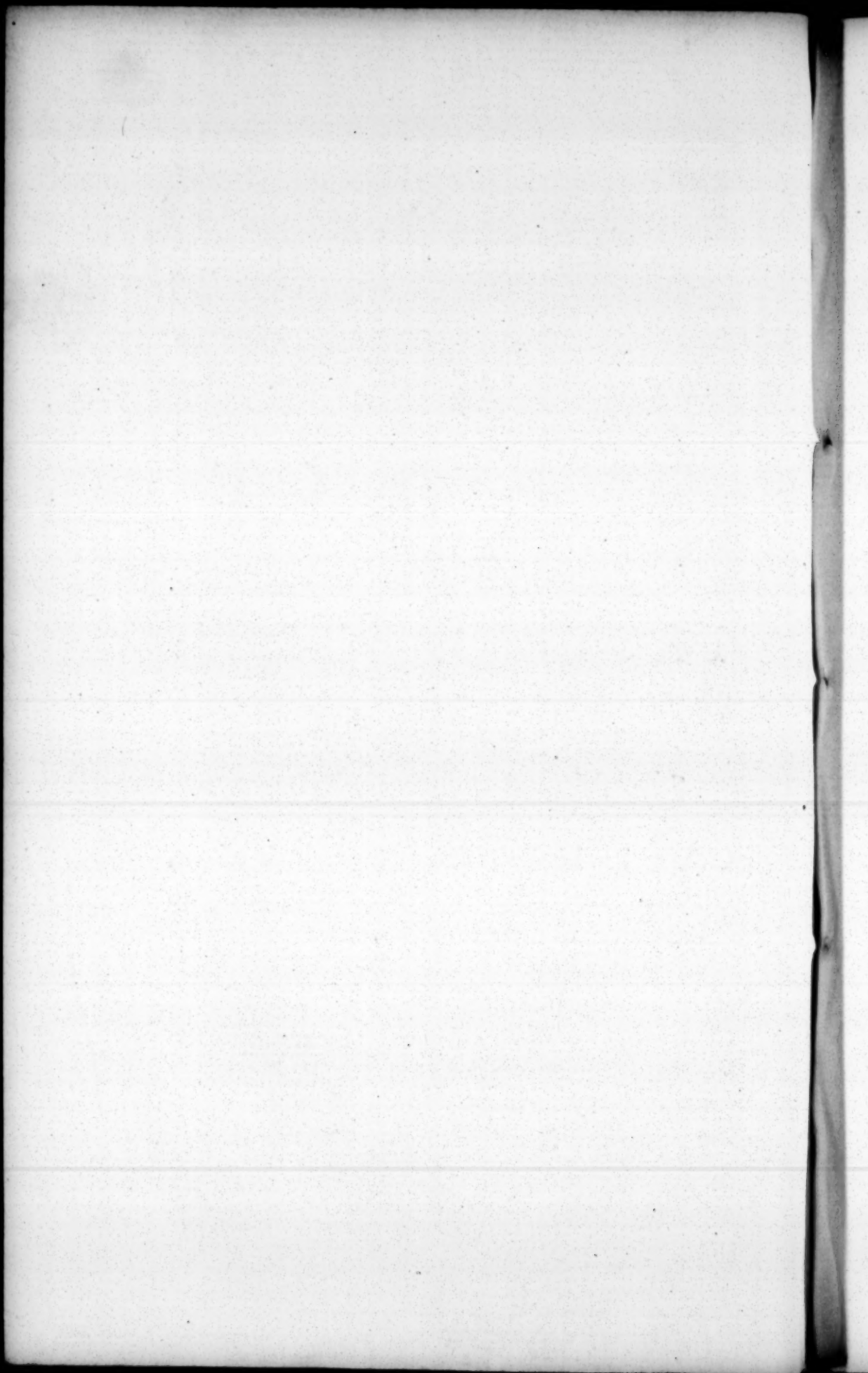
A
D E F E N C E
O F
P R O T E S T A N T I S M :

In A N S W E R to

The Modest Plea for Popery.

Offered to the Consideration of those whom
Papists have seduc'd, or are endeavouring to
draw over to their Religion.







A
D E F E N C E
O F
P R O T E S T A N T I S M.

WHETHER the complaint of the growth of Popery be well grounded or not, is a question which I cannot answer. And supposing it be just, it will not follow that Popery in point of argument has the better of Protestantism, because the increase of Popery may easily be accounted for some other way. As the doctrine of merit has been entertained and established in the Church of *Rome*, by which means it becomes a proper principle of action to Papists, and as the bringing over Protestants to Popery is by them esteemed greatly meritorious; so this is a proper, and probably a prevailing, motive with Papists to be greatly industrious in making converts to their Religion. However, whether this prin-

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ciple be a motive to their zeal in making converts or not, this is apparent, that most among them, who are people of fortune, take care to use their wealth in such a way as to make it for the present interest of those Protestants who are near them, and have a dependance upon them, to turn Papists; and this, together with a representation of the concessions made by Protestants, and their near approaches both in doctrine and practice to Popery, with other arts which they are not wanting to use, may sometimes succeed to the making converts. That such conversions to Popery may sometimes happen, is not to be wondered at. For as present interest is the leading and governing principle in abundance of people, and as some Papists employ their wealth and other abilities, and make use of every art and means, to make converts as aforesaid; so it is not at all strange that some weak and necessitous Protestants (who by their high-church principles, and their aversion to such other Protestants as differ from them, are beforehand prepared for Popery) should be wrought upon thereby to turn Papists, especially when their present interest is greatly concerned in the case.

AND as *Solomon* observes, *there is a time and a season for every work and every device done under the sun*; so probably Papists watch those seasons, in order to render their endeavours successful; and this may be the case

case at this day. This is a time in which murmurings and complaints abound, whether just or unjust is not the question; this is a time in which Protestants are greatly divided into parties, and either do not understand, or else are regardless of, their true interest, and in which the affections of many seem to be greatly alienated from those who have the government of them. These and other circumstances, which now concur, seem to render it a proper season for Papists to play their part in making converts; and therefore it may justly be presumed that now their Emissaries are busily employed, and every engine is set at work, and every means is used, in order to obtain that end: So that if there should now be more converts to Popery than heretofore, it is not to be wondered at. From what I have observed I think it appears, that admitting some Protestants have of late turned Papists, yet it does not follow that Popery in point of argument has the better of Protestantism, nor does Popery gain much reputation by such converts. However, if Protestants could be prevailed upon to consider what is their true interest, and to pay a proper regard to it; if they would be kindly affectionated one to another, and bear one with another in their different sentiments and practices in matters of Religion, and were they united by a hearty affection to those who have the government of them; then surely they would

have nothing to fear from the growth of Popery, because it could not possibly hurt them. But great is our misfortune, that this is not our case. This therefore is worthy the consideration of Protestants, because it is what they are greatly interested in, and it is this weakness of ours in which the strength of Papists consists. This also is worthy the consideration of those who have the direction of publick affairs, because the security of the government does greatly depend upon it, and because it lies upon them to take care that our breaches be not widened, but healed. And if those entrusted with the direction of publick affairs could make use of such means as would effectually engage the affections of the people to the government they are under, then I think we might challenge both Papists and Jacobites, and all who have the interest of a Popish Pretender at heart, to do their worst. But farther, I observe,

THAT tho', at the reformation, the ground of Protestants separation from the church of *Rome* was because Popery is a very great corruption of Christianity, yet those who separated from that church did not give up every absurd doctrine and superstitious practice, but retained some which with equal justice they might have given up and protested against. But then this is not to be wondered at; neither will it be of advantage to the cause of Popery. For as Popery consists of a very large collection of absurd

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furd doctrines, and of superstitious practices; so it was not to be expected that those who first separated from the church of *Rome* should at once exercise such attention, and attain to such discernment, as to make an exact and perfect separation of the tares from the wheat; but the contrary to this might more naturally be expected, *viz.* that a mixture would remain, which was plainly the case in fact. Those absurd doctrines and superstitious practices, which were most gross and most apparent, or many of them at least, our first Reformers discerned, separated from, and protested against, and others they retained; but then those which they retained cannot possibly serve the cause of Popery, because they are not the less absurd or the less superstitious by being retained by Protestants; and therefore all that will follow from it is only this, *viz.* that in all those cases in which either absurd doctrines or superstitious practices remained among Protestants, in those instances the reformation was imperfect.

AGAIN: At the reformation those invested with civil power took upon them to direct in the affairs of religion: And accordingly the reformation of national churches could not possibly rise higher, or come to any greater perfection, than the civil powers of those times were pleased to direct and appoint. And supposing there were some doctrines and practices retained by our first reformers,
which

which were fit to have been given up and discarded, and that these, or some of them at least, have been by the authority of the civil Magistrates (either from principle, or out of policy, and possibly from their having been awed or influenced by the Clergy) perpetuated to this time, yet this can be of no service to the cause of Popery; because any doctrine is not the less absurd, nor any practice the less superstitious, by its having the authority of the civil Magistrate to defend and establish it. Besides, supposing there are some absurd doctrines and superstitious practices, which have been and are still supported by the civil power among Protestants, yet probably these have been given up and protested against by other Protestants, and that this is the case seemsevident from the divisions and separations that have arisen among them; and therefore the Creeds and Institutions of national Churches cannot be a just Test of Protestantism, because they may not be the act of, nor be consented to, by all Protestants. I am a Protestant, and it is urged to me by a Papist, in favour of Popery, that such or such a doctrine or practice is part of the constitution of this or that Protestant national Church. Now supposing such doctrine be absurd, or such practice be superstitious, then the question is, What is this to Protestantism, or what is this to me, who protest against such doctrine or practice, or what advantage can Popery possibly

possibly gain thereby? Why truly nothing at all, because if there be any such doctrines or practices, in the constitution of any national Church among Protestants, all that will justly follow from it is only this, namely, that in such instances their reformation is imperfect, and consequently that such doctrines and practices should no longer be retained, but ought to be given up and protested against.

AGAIN: As the Clergy in the church of *Rome* by degrees became possessed of such great and unreasonable power, dignity and wealth, as has in fact been greatly injurious to Christianity and to the Christian world; so at the reformation those were not reduced to their proper bounds, but in part remained exorbitant with the Protestant Clergy; and this has in a great measure prevented any farther reformation. For as those who are in possession of such power, dignity, and wealth, are generally jealous of and guard against every thing which has the least tendency to diminish them, and they likewise take care to improve every opportunity to enlarge and increase them; so this, I fear, has been too much the case of the Protestant Clergy. I speak not this of every Clergyman, but only of the Clergy considered as a body, who as such are concerned for, and do apparently pursue, the interest of that body; and this, as I said before, has in a great measure prevented any farther reformation.

tion. For when any proposal has been made for the removing or altering any thing which ought to have been removed, or altered, it has been generally opposed and rendered unsuccessful; the Clergy strictly abiding by this principle, namely, not to admit of the least alteration, grounded upon this reason, *viz.* that if an alteration be once begun, they cannot be sure where it will stop, and consequently it may possibly affect the power, dignity, and wealth they are in the present possession of. And indeed those very desirable things, *viz.* power, dignity, and wealth, which are carried to a great and unreasonable height, and are plentifully shared among the Popish Clergy, these shew it to be for the present interest; and therefore it has been, and probably will be, the endeavour of the Protestant Clergy to approach as near to the Church of *Rome* as is consistent with a state of independency upon her; and accordingly our zealous Ecclesiasticks have made large concessions that way. But then those concessions are of no service to the cause of Popery, nor can they justly be urged against Protestants, because they are not the concessions of Protestants in general, much less of all them, but only of such men who want to be possessed of Papal power, dignity, and wealth in a Protestant Church. This it is said was pushed in the Reign of King *Charles* the First; and if one may judge from the late claims to
powers

powers independent on the state, and from other circumstances which have concurred, then probably there is a strong disposition for another push. For as all hope and expectation of an enlargement of the power, dignity, and wealth of the Clergy by and from a Popish Pretender at present seems to be lost, the view of which in times past spirited such Clergymen, and engaged many of them strenuously to oppose the government; so having little or no expectation from that quarter, I think it may fairly be presumed they will tack about, in hope of obtaining their ends by and from a Government, which otherwise probably they would have little or no regard for. This is the Popery, which of the two we have the most reason to fear; because we are in more danger of falling into it, and therefore it ought most carefully to be guarded against. This surely is worthy the consideration of a *British* Parliament; because if Ecclesiastical power, dignity, and wealth be enlarged, then we may be assured from the experience of former times, that Ecclesiastical Tyranny will succeed, and bear a proportion to it. This is likewise worthy the consideration of Protestant Princes, who are likely to suffer by an enlargement of these, as well as their subjects. History sufficiently informs us what Popish Princes have been forced to bear and submit to, and how their affairs have been embarrassed, where Ecclesiastical

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power, dignity, and wealth have run up to their height. And those ought to give warning to Protestant Princes to beware of Ecclesiasticks, and to guard against any increase of their power, dignity, or wealth, lest some time or other the posterity of those Princes should share in the same fate. This also is worthy the consideration of Court Ministries, or those who are intrusted with the direction of publick affairs; because as the weight of the Clergy in any nation bears a proportion to the Power, Dignity, and Wealth they are in possession of, so an enlargement of these increaseth that weight in proportion, and this renders them so much the more capable of distressing a Ministry, which is likely to be the case, except their interest lies on the Ministry's side; and then they will take care to improve it to the utmost, that being generally the governing principle of action to many of them in these matters. And when they are gratified in this respect, they are not the more to be relied upon; because such a body of Clergy as will be bribed into the service of a Ministry to-day, we may be assured will turn against that Ministry to-morrow, if their interest will be served by it, this being to act a uniform and consistent part. Besides, if a Ministry have no other point to gain or secure but the publick good, which is the business of a Ministry, then surely the aid of the Clergy will not be wanted; because this is a
point

point that in all probability may as effectually be gained or secured without it; and therefore the calling in the aid of the Clergy (if such a thing should ever be) may possibly (with too much justice) be thought to be a sign or token of the want either of wisdom or virtue in that Ministry which shall so call them in.

HAVING made the precedent observations, I proceed to consider the argument offered in favour of Popery. The grand principle upon which Popery is supposed to be founded is this, *viz.* that error in points of faith is damnable. From this principle the necessity of an infallible living judge, to be always present in and with the Church, to determine in matters of faith, is justly inferred. And this principle being allowed and maintained by too many Protestants, from hence several consequences are supposed justly to follow, which greatly affect the cause of Protestantism. These points are the sum of what is offered in the *modest plea for Popery*, which points I shall consider severally and distinctly.

Whether the grand principle upon which Popery is founded, and which is its main support, be allowed and maintained by Protestants; or whether the consequences which are supposed justly to follow from that principle do greatly affect Protestantism, are points of no great importance in the present case; because if upon examination this principle

should appear to be false and groundless, then of course it must fall, and consequently every thing built upon it falls with it. The point therefore to be enquired into is, whether error in points of faith be damnable. If error in points of faith be damnable, then there are two ways only in which it is capable of being so; either from the natural inherent vileness and moral turpitude of error itself, which renders the erroneous person the proper object of the heavy displeasure and wrath of the Almighty, or else it is made so by the arbitrary appointment and institution of God. But that error in points of faith is not damnable through any natural inherent vileness or moral turpitude in error itself, is already fully proved to my hand in the *modest plea for Popery*, pages 15, 16. The Author's words are as follow: " For if a person should form
" a wrong judgment of any proposition,
" when he has done all that in reason can be
" expected from him to have his understanding
" rightly informed, and has not suffered
" his judgment to be biaſſed or over-ruled by
" prejudice, partiality, vitiated affections, or
" otherways, but has honestly formed it up-
" on the case according to the evidence
" which came within his notice; in such a
" case as a man follows pure and uncorrupted
" nature, and acts agreeably to it, and to
" that principle of intelligence planted in him
" by the great author of his being; so there
" cannot possibly be any natural inherent
" vileness

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“ vileness or moral turpitude in his conduct,
 “ which renders him worthy of, and which
 “ subjects him to, the heavy displeasure of his
 “ maker; and therefore if simple error in
 “ points of faith be damnable, it must be
 “ made so by the arbitrary appointment and
 “ institution of God.” From what this au-
 thor has observed it appears exceeding plain,
 that simple error of itself, and from the na-
 ture of the thing, cannot possibly be damna-
 ble. And that it is not made so by any act
 or institution of God, is a point as plain and
 evident as the former. God is a being who
 is infinite in all moral, as well as in all natu-
 ral, perfections; and therefore it is greatly
 absurd in itself, and greatly injurious to his
 moral character, to suppose that he would
 punish any creature, much less punish him
 so severely, for that which does not, in the
 nature of the thing, render that creature the
 proper object of punishment but rather ren-
 ders him the proper object of approbation
 and reward; which is plainly the present case,
 if simple error be made damnable merely by
 his institution. It would be altogether as
 just to suppose that the God of truth would
 be guilty of a lie, as to suppose that he would,
 by an act of mere sovereignty, make error
 damnable; the latter being equally as con-
 sistent with his moral perfections as the for-
 mer; and therefore the supposition is not to
 be admitted. This proposition then must
 be false; and were it contained in any revela-
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tion, could not possibly be of God, because this evidence against the divinity of a revelation would and must be stronger than any external evidence that could possibly be offered in its favour. But then it is to be remembered, that there is no such proposition contained in the Christian revelation. Christ hath assured us from his own mouth, that the end and purpose of his coming was to call sinners to repentance. Whoever therefore, in obedience to the call of Christ, repents and turns to God, and does works meet for repentance (which in the Gospel is called believing, and hearing Christ's sayings and doing them, and doing the will of his father) such an one we are assured will be saved. And on the other side, whoever, notwithstanding the call and invitation of Christ, and the promises and threatnings delivered in his Gospel, will not repent, but will go on in a wicked and vicious course of life (which in the Gospel is considered as not believing, not doing Christ's sayings, not doing the will of his father) such an one we are assured from the same Gospel shall be damned. This is the true Gospel of Jesus Christ touching this matter; but that mere simple error in points of faith is damnable, this is no part of that Gospel, and is only a proposition advanced and maintained by men who call themselves Christ's followers.

THUS I have shewn that the grand principle upon which Popery is founded is false
and

and groundless. I proceed now to enquire whether if this principle has been maintained by Protestants, it can be of any service to the Popish cause. And here I will admit the supposition, that this principle *viz.* that error in point of faith is damnable, has been allowed and maintained by all Protestants, tho' it is far from being the truth of the case, because whilst it has been avowed by some, it has been given up and protested against by others; but admitting it to have been maintained by all, yet surely that can be of no service to the cause of Popery. For as Popery is a great corruption of Christianity, so it is not the less corrupt for Protestants retaining a doctrine which is part of that corruption; and if this be the case of any Protestants, then the true inference which follows from it is, not that such Protestants ought to turn Papists, because that would be going from bad to worse, and, according to the old proverb, leaping out of the frying-pan into the fire; but the true inference is, that both Protestants and Papists ought to give up and protest against this and every other doctrine and practice which in point of argument cannot be defended by either.

AND if the aforesaid doctrine, *viz.* that error in points of faith is damnable, be false and groundless, as it is before shewn to be, then of course it must fall, and consequently the bulwark of Popery (*viz.* the necessity of an

an infallible living Judge to be always present with the Church to determine in matters of faith) and every thing else built upon it falls with it; and this shews how weak and defenceless in point of argument Popery is. I have already observed, that Popery is a great corruption of Christianity, consisting of a large collection of absurd doctrines, and of superstitious and unworthy practices, and that it is not to be wondered at if some parts of that corruption clave to our first Reformers. But then it will be very inconclusive to argue, that because there are Protestants who do still retain some parts of the corruption of Christianity called Popery, that therefore they ought to return back to the Church of *Rome*, and embrace the whole, when the true consequence is just the reverse, as I have already observed, *viz.* that they ought to purge themselves of those parts of that corruption which yet remain with them.

AGAIN: it is urged in the *Modest plea for Popery*, that if one absurd doctrine be admitted by Protestants, then by parity of reason any absurdity may and ought to be admitted by them: And that if one absurdity be rejected by Protestants because it is an absurdity, then all absurdities ought to be rejected by them upon the same grounds. To this I answer, that if Protestants would act a consistent part, then this not only might and ought, but it must and would be the case; that is, then Protestants would no longer halt betwixt two opinions, by being

ing Protestants in part, and Papists in part; but they would either give up one or the other; they would either return back to Popery, or give up every thing that is Popish; that is, every thing both in doctrine and in practice, which is a corruption of Christianity. But then tho' this great inconsistency of some Protestants be a just reproach to them, and renders them worthy of the reproof and admonition mentioned in *Matthew* vii. 3, 4, 5. yet it cannot be of any service to the cause of Popery, because an absurd doctrine, or a superstitious practice, is not the less so, nor the less a corruption of Christianity, by its being retained by some Protestants as I have already observed. Much less will this inconsistency of such Protestants, be a just ground for them to turn Papists, because the true use which they ought to make of it is, not to become more corrupt by returning back to the Church of *Rome*, but to purge and reform themselves from those branches of Popish corruption which yet cleave to them, as is observed above.

AGAIN: it is urged that if God acts from mere sovereignty in one branch of the Christian Scheme, (which must be the case if error in points of faith be made damnable by his institution) then he may do the same in any or in every other part of it, and then no argument can be raised from the moral perfections of God against any Popish
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doctrine or practice whatever ; because (upon this supposition) the moral perfections of God are quite out of the case. I answer, admitting the reasoning in this paragraph to be just and conclusive, yet it is of no service to the cause of Popery, because the principle upon which it is grounded is false, as has been shewn above. Besides, Christianity is not an arbitrary institution in whole nor in part, but is founded upon the strictest reason and truth; and therefore the moral perfections of God are a proper foundation for argument with respect to it ; and consequently whatever is weak, childish, ridiculous, malevolent, and the like, cannot possibly have any place in it, or bear any relation to it. And tho' some Protestants have maintained principles that are favourable to Popery, and which disqualify them from reasoning against it, because such reasonings may justly be retorted upon them ; yet this is of no real service to the cause of Popery, because those principles cannot be defended. Neither can this be a proper ground for such Protestants to turn Papists, because every principle, which in point of argument cannot be defended, ought to be given up, as I have already observed.

AGAIN : it is urged that if mere error in such points of faith as are fundamental be damnable, and if such damnable errors be a just ground for prosecutions among Protestants, then by parity of reason they will be as just a ground

ground for persecutions among Papists. Answer: supposing this conclusion be just, yet it can be of no service to the cause of Popery, because the principle it is drawn from is false, as has been shewn above; and therefore persecuting or prosecuting men on account of Religion may notwithstanding not be just, but greatly wicked, in either case. Man is an intelligent, conscious, free being, who is not only capable of discerning and judging of the fitness and unfitness of his own actions, and of directing and governing his own conscience and behaviour accordingly, but also he is hereby rendered justly accountable for the same, and therefore may reasonably expect to be rewarded or punished in another state according to his behaviour in this. And tho' he is not only liable but in danger of erring in complex and difficult cases, and consequently of acting wrong when he intends to act right in such cases, yet this does not destroy his agency, nor render him less accountable than otherwise he would be, because he is capable of acting a reasonable or an unreasonable part, and consequently of being virtuous or vicious under those circumstances. Man in complex and difficult cases is capable not only of examining the question before him, and of comparing things, and drawing conclusions from proper premises, and of receiving light and information from others in order to have his understanding rightly in-

formed, and his actions rightly directed; but he is also capable of acting fairly, carefully, and impartially, or of being unfair, negligent, and partial in the use and application of those means; and therefore he is justly accountable for his actions as well in these as in all other cases. And this is the case of every individual of our species, every man in difficult and complex cases being liable and in danger of erring, so hereby every man is by nature disqualified and render'd incapable of judging for, and governing the consciences and actions of other men, it being grossly absurd to suppose, that any man or body of men can be qualified, or have a right to judge for, or to govern the consciences of other men in such cases, in which those judges are liable to err, as well as those they pretend to judge for. And tho' in difficult and complex cases a man ought to borrow what light he can from others in order to have his understanding rightly informed, and his actions rightly directed; and tho' others ought to give him all the information they can in order to his forming a true judgment of the point in question; yet still he is to direct his actions by his own judgment thus informed, and not by the judgment of others, without, or in opposition to, his own. And the reasons for this are evident, *viz.* first, because no other man or body of men are qualified for, or constituted his judges or his governors in these

these matters. As no other man or body of men are either infallible or impeccable, the want of the former renders them incapable of, and the want of the latter renders them unfit for and unworthy of, such a trust. Whoever is fallible and liable to error himself, is by this disqualified for being a judge for, and a governor of, the consciences of other men in matters of religion: and whoever is liable to mislead, deceive, and impose upon others, such an one is by this rendered unfit and unworthy to be intrusted with a power of judging for and governing mens consciences in these matters; because he is not only liable to abuse his trust in matters of the highest importance, which of itself renders it unfit that he should be intrusted with such a power, but also the trust itself becomes a strong and powerful temptation to that abuse, as it may be subservient to the power, dignity, and wealth of those who are intrusted as abovesaid. And supposing some inconvenience should arise to society from mens exercising the right of private judgment in matters of religion, yet surely that inconvenience bears no proportion to the much greater evils and mischiefs which have arisen to mankind from a restraint of that liberty, of which all Popish countries are sad and melancholy instances; and I think it will be hard to shew, that either *England* or *Holland* suffers any inconvenience at this time from mens being at liberty to exercise

exercise their right of private judgment as aforesaid. Secondly, every man ought to judge for himself, and to have the direction and government of his own conscience and actions in matters of religion, because he himself is answerable, and not any other person or persons, for his behaviour herein. Thirdly, every man ought to act thus, because were he to direct his behaviour by the judgment of others, without or in opposition to his own, he would in that case act quite out of his character, as an intelligent, conscious, free being; and he would rather appear to be a consciousnessless animal, than a moral agent. And as every man is by nature constituted a judge for himself, and a director and governor of his own conscience and actions in matters of religion; and as every man is likewise by nature excluded from being a judge for, and from being a governor of, the consciences and actions of other men; so if any man, or body of men, should take upon him or them to judge for or to govern the consciences and actions of any other man; or if he or they should condemn and punish a man for judging for himself, and for acting according to his own conscience, this would be to judge and condemn without any just authority for so doing, and it would be to punish where the grounds of punishment are wanting, which surely must be greatly wicked and vile. How abominable must it therefore be in the sight
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of God for men to afflict and punish one another causelessly, and for judging and acting according to their consciences; this surely must be exceeding odious in his sight. So that by Protestants retaining persecuting principles, they retain the worst part of Popery, and that which has been the greatest evil to mankind. Alas! what is Transubstantiation, Purgatory, praying to Saints, and the like, when put in competition with persecution? The former are but trifles when compared with the latter; the former may be greatly weak, wrong, and superstitious; whereas the latter is greatly wicked and abominable. The worst character given of the Whore of *Babylon* is, that she has made herself drunk with the blood of the Saints; that is, she has been a persecutor or prosecutor of innocent people for judging and acting according to their consciences. This therefore is worthy the consideration of all persecutors and prosecutors, both Papists and Protestants. And it will be but a poor excuse for all the righteous blood which has been shed upon this account, and for all the pain and misery which they have brought upon their fellow-creatures, for them to urge that those whom they have afflicted were stubborn and obstinate, that they were Hereticks, or Schismatics, or the like. I say that these will be but poor excuses when they shall be called to give an account to God for all the distress and misery which they have

have thus causelessly brought upon mankind. Then their righteous judge may very justly interrogate every persecutor and prosecutor after this manner: Who made thee a ruler and a judge in these matters? Who art thou that judgest another's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. And supposing it be as thou sayest, *viz.* that he whom thou hast afflicted was stubborn and obstinate, or he was an Heretick, or Schismatick, or the like, yet what is that to thee, who hast suffered no injury by those things, and who wast neither qualified for nor constituted his judge in those respects? I appointed and gave it in charge that those tares and the wheat should grow together without molestation until this time, which is the time of harvest, and now I will appoint their separation; but thou hast taken upon thee to controul me herein. I am their proper judge, who am both able and willing, and will now render to every one of them as they shall deserve; but thou hast, as it were, wrested the work out of my hand, and hast taken upon thee to judge, condemn, and punish them before the time. These things surely are worthy the consideration of all persecutors and prosecutors, because they are matters of the utmost concern to them. And tho' to the shame of some Protestants it must be acknowledged, that prosecutions on account of religion have sometimes taken place among them, yet this will not justify Papists; because persecutions
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by them is not the less wicked for that some Protestants have been guilty of the like faults. Neither will the justness of this charge be a proper ground for such Protestants to turn Papists, because the true use which they ought to make of it is, not to be guilty of such practices for time to come; and then the charge will become groundless, and consequently must be vainly urged.

AGAIN: it is urged, that if mere simple error in such points of faith as are fundamental be damnable, and if from hence it becomes necessary for the present comfort and the future safety of Christians, that an infallible living Judge should be always present with the Church to give an absolute and certain determination in matters of faith; then as the Church of *Rome* maintains that this infallible living Judge is in and with them, and as this Judge has no competitor, the question is, Why should he be rejected, or what will justify Protestants in rejecting him? Answer: As the principle reasoned from in this case is false, therefore there can be no place for the interrogations founded upon it. And tho' in an arbitrary institution (which the Christian is not) the institutor is at his liberty to make what he pleases points of faith, and to determine which of these shall be fundamental and which not, and which indeed would then be variable at pleasure; yet it must be out of the power of any being to alter the nature of things, by

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making the same proposition to be a truth at one time, and an error at another; which I think has sometimes been the case with respect to the determinations of this pretended infallible Judge in the Church of *Rome*; and surely this must be a just objection against any person or persons who shall either separately or conjunctly pretend to be such a Judge in that Church, even supposing Christianity were an arbitrary institution, when in truth it is not.

THUS I have considered the argument offered in favour of Popery, and have shewn it to be weak and inconclusive. Upon the whole I observe, that if the grand principle upon which Popery is founded, and which is its main support, *viz.* that error in points of faith is damnable, be false and groundless, as I have before shewn it is, and therefore it must fall; and if the great Bulwark of Popery grounded upon this principle, and which guards and secures almost every part of it, *viz.* the necessity of an infallible living Judge to be always present with the Church to determine in matters of faith; if this Bulwark of Popery falls with it, as most certainly it does, then it must be very weak and idle in Papists to argue against Protestants upon such false and groundless principles, which yet is too often the case. The same may be said with respect to such arguments offered in favour of Popery as are drawn from the concessions made by Protestants, and from their main-
taining

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taining principles which are favourable to Popery, and the like; these are of no real service to the Popish cause, as is before shewn. The case is the same with respect to that bold but groundless assertion of Papists, *viz.* that there is no salvation out of the Church of *Rome*. This serves to fright and terrify weak minds, who are governed more by their passions than their reason; and this may sometimes have its effect, tho' nothing can be more weak than for men to turn Papists upon such grounds. The grounds of mens acceptance with God, and of their obtaining the divine mercy, is declared in the Gospel to be, not their relation to and union with this or that particular society or congregation of Christians called churches, but their repenting and turning to God and doing works meet for repentance, by denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and by living a godly, a righteous, a sober, and a benevolent life. Wherever therefore these are found, and the true end and purpose of the Gospel is thus answered upon a man, his salvation is secure according to the Gospel, whether he be a member of the Church of *England*, of *Scotland*, of *Geneva*, or of *Rome*. But then tho' I do here acknowledge that salvation may be had in the Church of *Rome*, yet nothing can be fairly concluded from hence in favour of Popery, nor is mens salvation less hazardous in that Church on this account. Popery is, as I have already observed, a great corruption

of Christianity, which corruption partly consists in pointing out to men false grounds of obtaining the divine favour and mercy. This being the case, the members of the *Romish* Church are in very great danger of relying upon those false grounds for salvation, which their Church has thus recommended to them, and thereby of neglecting the true and only grounds of their acceptance with God; and this renders their salvation exceeding hazardous in that Church, tho' not impossible to be obtained. How egregiously weak must it therefore be for Papists to argue, that because Protestants allow that salvation may be obtained in the Church of *Rome*, and Papists deny that it can be had any where but in that Church, therefore it is the duty of Protestants to turn Papists, because this is confessedly chusing the safer side; this, I say, is weakly urged, because, as I have shewn, salvation is not more safe but more hazardous in the church of *Rome*, and because it is not the opinions of Papists nor Protestants, but the justness of those grounds upon which their respective opinions are founded, that ought to determine our judgments and practices herein.

I do not here take upon me to examine every thing that is or may be offered in favour of Popery, because that would be going farther than I intended, and because I am not apprised what is or may be urged on that subject. But this I say, that if those Papists, who,

who, out of regard to truth and their duty, are zealously endeavouring to make converts amongst us, which is a commendable zeal if they would not remain in a great measure concealed with respect to what they have to offer for their religion, but would make it publick, by which all people would be rendered capable of examining it, and, if it has strength of argument on its side, would have the opportunity of being convinced by it. I say, if Papists would do this, which I think they ought to be allowed to do without molestation, and which is certainly a more fair and reputable way than to remain behind the curtain, offering their arguments only in private to weak or necessitous people, then I assure them (tho' I can only engage for myself) that what they have to offer shall be fairly and candidly examined, and, as far as it has truth on its side, it shall be generously and publickly acknowledged. On the other side, if Protestants would make a consistent, and thereby a just and proper, defence against Papists, then they must become Protestants throughout, by giving up and protesting against every thing that is Popish. For except they do this, Papists will make their advantages, and with a great deal of justice will turn their arguments upon them. But if they do this, then I think I may be bold to say, that Popery in point of argument cannot possibly stand its ground.

To

To conclude: if the case be as it has been represented, *viz.* that Popery greatly gains ground among us, then it will be proper to enquire, who are the people that Papists make converts of, and what may be the consequence of such conversions. As to the first, I have already observed that it is from the concessions our high-church Protestants have made, and from the Popish doctrines which they retain, that Papists derive their strength, and which they make their advantages of; and therefore it is greatly probable that they are weak people of our high-church party, which are converted to Popery by them. This is what the leaders of that party have been a long time preparing the people for (whether intentionally or not, I cannot say) by endeavouring to persuade them to give up their right of private judgment, and to rely upon the judgment of the Church, and by maintaining that the church has rights independent on the state, and the like; and in particular by endeavouring to render Dissenters as odious and contemptible as possible; all which have an apparent tendency to render Popery in the gross less disagreeable to them. And that it has had this effect is plain and evident from the declarations made by many, *viz.* that they would sooner turn Papists than Presbyterians. It is to this that two of our Anniversaries, *viz.* the 30th of *January* and the 29th of *May*, are made subservient; and indeed at present

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present they seem to answer no other purpose, but to prepare the people for Popery in the way before mentioned. And it is by this the popular zeal and the popular outcry against Popery, which formerly prevail'd, and was in part a security against it, is now worn off, and the minds of the populace are now much more prepared and disposed for a change that way than heretofore. And as our high-church-men can make but a weak defence against Popery upon their own principles, and as the minds of the people have been prepared for Popery by them in the way above mentioned, and this has rendered their party proper subjects for the arguments used by Papists to work upon; so it is not unlikely that many weak people of that party have of late turn'd Papists, the latter being a natural consequence of the former. This then seems to be the case, *viz.* that as high-church concessions and high-church doctrines, and the practices of high-church leaders, have paved the way for Popery, so it may justly be presumed that they are high-church-men who become converts to it. But then what the consequence of this will be, I cannot take upon me to say, tho' what is aimed at is obvious, *viz.* the destruction of our Liberties both civil and religious, the extirpation of the present Royal Family, and the bringing in a Popish Pretender. And if this be the case, which most undoubtedly it is, then

then certainly it is high time for his Majesty King *George* to distinguish betwixt his friends and his enemies, and to know who and what he is chiefly to guard against. For if his Majesty and the Royal Family have any enemies, which is a point that does not admit of a dispute, then the question is who they are, and the answer is obvious, *viz.* they are Papists, and many high-church-men who are Papists in part; and should his Majesty load any of these with his favours, or intrust them with power, it would be nourishing vipers in his bosom, and (if I may so speak) with his own milk, who as they will always have his or his posterity's overthrow in view, so some time or other (if proper care be not taken) they may have it in their power to effect it. This also is worthy the consideration of our Legislature. For if Popery prevails, then our constitution and government is proportionably so much the more in danger by it; and then it concerns those, who are impowered to make laws for our security, to do every thing that is necessary towards the strengthening the Protestant interest among us. And as our Protestant Dissenters are well known to be fast friends to the present Royal Family, so if they are under any legal incapacity of serving the Government, or their Country, or the Protestant interest, which by the test-act they are thought to be, then most certainly it ought to be removed. For as the test-act was introduced formerly to guard against Popery

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perly under the circumstances we were then in, so the different circumstances we are at present under may render it altogether as proper to abolish that act now, in order to answer the same end. King *Charles* the Second was known to be well affected to Popery, if not a direct Papist; and that engaged the Legislature at that time to provide against the ill consequences which might arise from it. And as it was in the power of the King so far to take Papists into the Government, as to employ them under him both in civil and military affairs, and thereby to strengthen and increase the Popish interest among us; so the test-act was introduced to put it out of the King's power to do us this mischief. But as there is now no danger of his present Majesty's taking Papists into the Government, and consequently the end to be answered by the test-act ceases; and as the Dissenters by this act are, or at least are supposed to be, rendered less capable of serving the Government, their Country, and the Protestant interest, than otherwise they would be; and as Popery is supposed now greatly to prevail; so these things, admitting them to be the case, render it greatly expedient that the test-act should be removed for our better security against it, tho' this is what many of our high-church party will of course oppose, because it tends to disappoint what they hope one time or other to bring about. To say that it

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ought to have been done at the Revolution, is the same as to say that it ought to be done now, seeing it was not done then; and the rather, because the reasons for removing it are now grown so much the stronger, as the Popish interest is increased amongst us.

F I N I S.

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